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THE NEW YORKER

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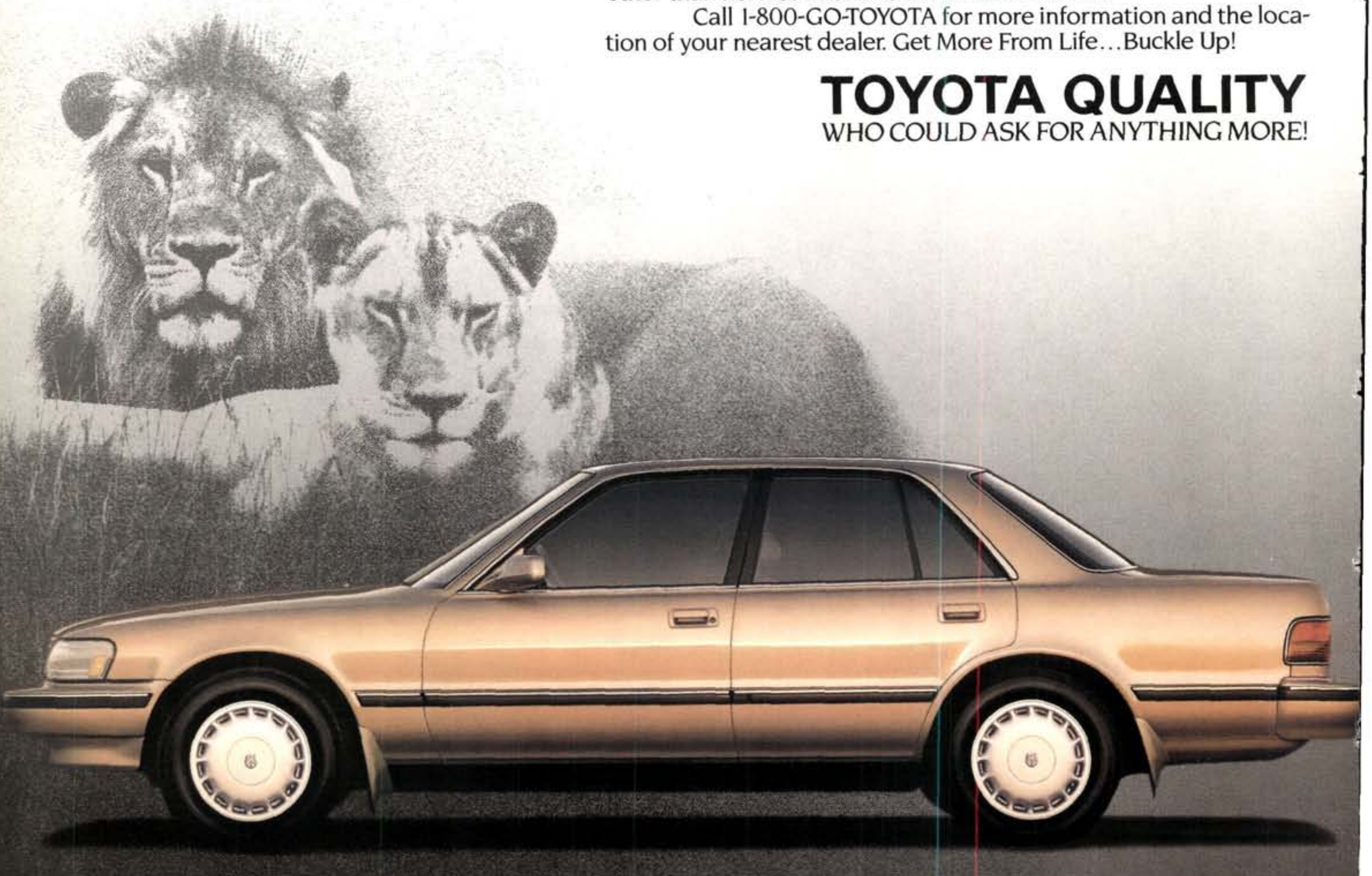

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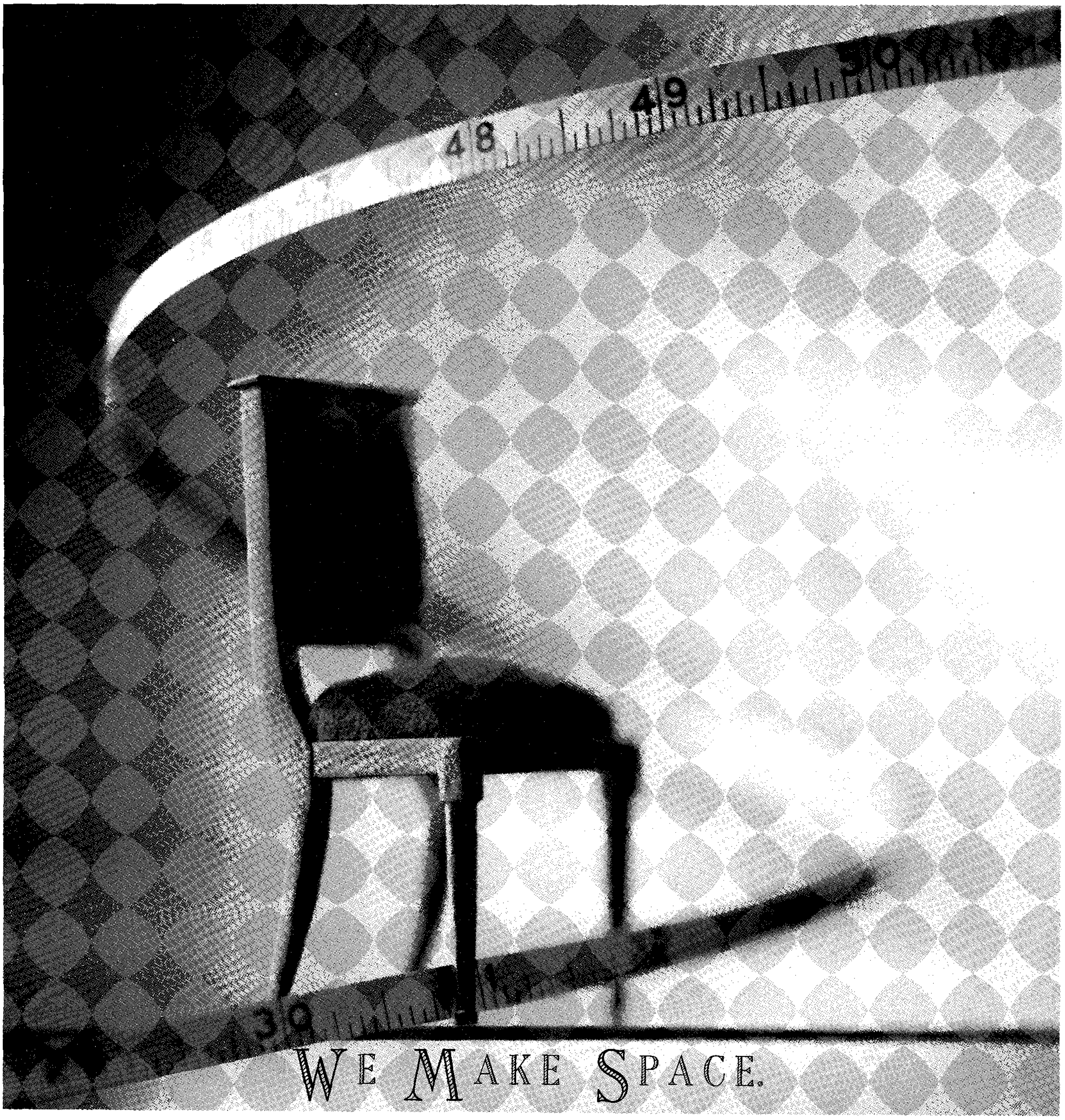

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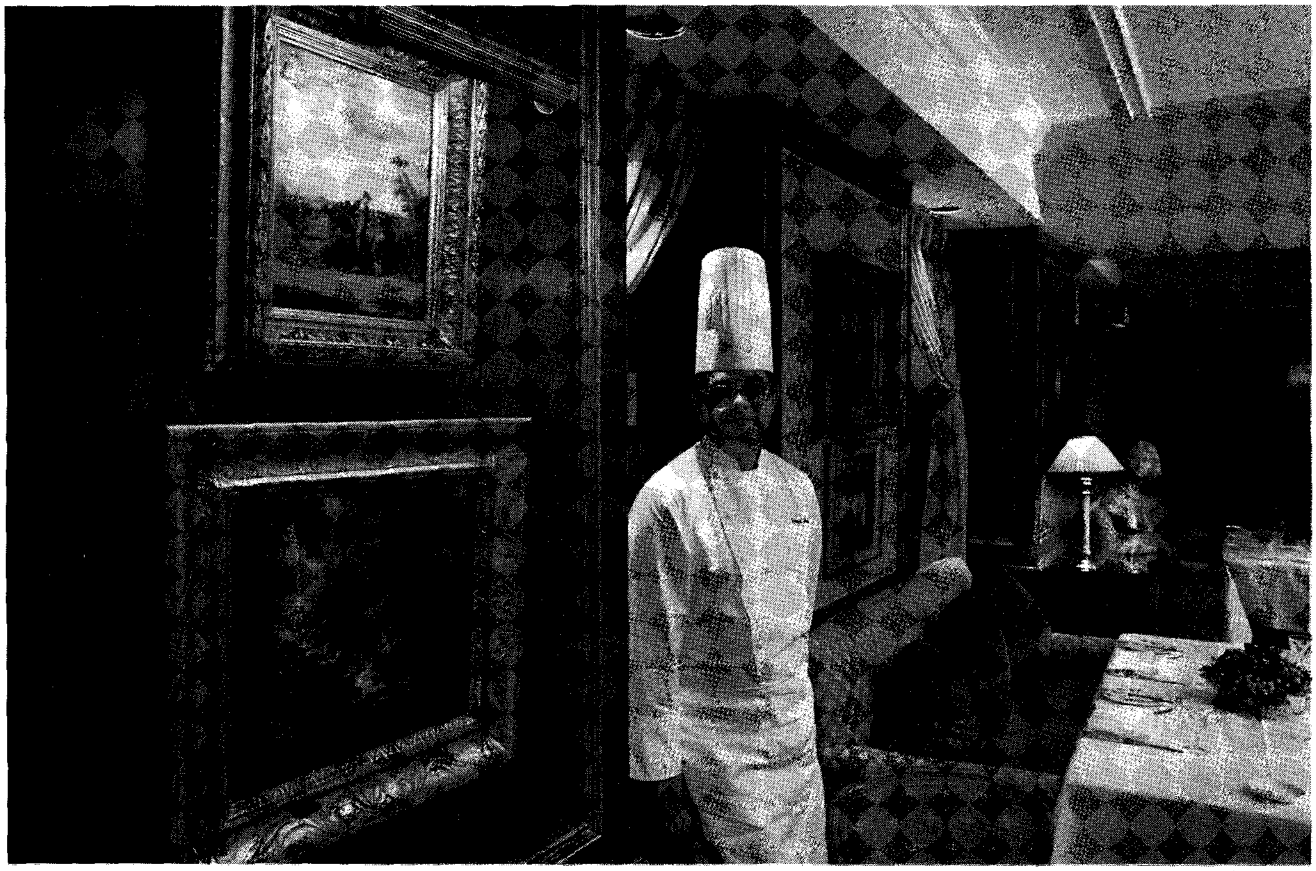

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

ON a rainy Wednesday afternoon, in the fourteenth year of the longest run in Broadway history, "A Chorus Line" belongs to the very old and the very young. Two middle rows of the orchestra at the Shubert Theatre are taken up by a group from the East Flatbush Senior Citizens Center; three extra spaces at the end of a Flatbush row are filled by a handsome trombone player and his two young daughters. The trombone player worked in the show's pit orchestra for a year when "A Chorus Line" was in San Francisco—a decade ago, before the girls were born. They have grown up listening to the original cast recording, and now he thinks they are at last old enough to see the show. Perhaps because most people in the theatre haven't paid full freight (the Flatbush folks are in on a group rate; the trombone player knows the assistant conductor, who is getting a chance to lead the orchestra at this performance), the place has the happy and unpressured feeling of a movie matinée. It's raining out—let's go to a show! For the matinée, there has been a major shuffle of parts, and each program is filled with a little bouquet of white slips ("The role of Val, usually played by Wanda Richert, will be played by Niki Harris"); the old people study these notes gravely, as though the cast were made up of their grandchildren.

Listening to all the wonderful and familiar songs, watching the now familiar coups de théatre (the line with faces covered by résumés, the lonely confessors caught in spotlights), the amateur matinéegoer may recall that when "A Chorus Line" opened (post-Watergate, pre-AIDS) it was supposed to be about honesty, the disassembly of the façade of the Broadway musical to reveal the hard human truths that lay beneath. Now, on this Wednesday afternoon, the world it evokes seems as warm and distant as the Vienna of "Bitter Sweet." "A Chorus Line" has become the most touching of period pieces, and the last Broadway musical. A decade ago, it commented on the musical; now it *is* the musical.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone numbers listed with the theatres for information regarding schedules and ticket availability.)

Gus and Al—A comedy by Albert Innaurato about a character named Al, who travels back in time and befriends Gustav Mahler. Seen here last spring in a workshop production. Opens Feb. 27 at 8. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Lend Me a Tenor—A comedy by Ken Ludwig, an American playwright, which was recently done in London. With Victor Garber, Philip Bosco, Ron Holgate, Tovah Feldshuh, and Jane Connell; directed by Jerry Zaks. Previews through March 1. Opens March 2 at 6:45. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

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Measure for Measure—A dark comedy by the Bard, this one with Len Cariou, Kate Burton, Ethyl Eichelberger, and Jack Weston. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Metamorphosis—Mikhail Baryshnikov is Gregor Samsa in Steven Berkoff's one-act adaptation of the Kafka story. Previews March 2-5. Opens March 6 at 7. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

The Pajama Game—Judy Kaye, Lenora Nemetz, Richard Muenz, Avery Saltzman, and others singing "Hernando's Hideaway," "Steam Heat," and "7½ Cents" in a revival by the New York City Opera of the 1954 musical. Score and lyrics by Richard Adler and Jerry Ross, and book by George Abbott and Richard Bissell. Previews March 3-4. Opens March 4 at 8, and will run through April 16. (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

Run for Your Wife—A West End comedy written and directed by, and starring, Ray Cooney. Previews through March 5. Opens March 7 at 6:30. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 977-9370.)

Together Again for the First Time—Jo Sullivan and her daughter Emily Loesser in a revue of show tunes, including some by Miss Loesser's father, Frank. Opens Feb. 27 at 8. (Kaufman, 534 W. 42nd St. 564-8038.)

What the Butler Saw—Charles Keating, Carole Shelley, and Joseph Maher in Joe Orton's 1969 play. Directed by John Tillinger, who staged the 1986 revival of "Loot." Previews through March 7. Opens March 8 at 8. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)

The Winter's Tale—Mandy Patinkin, Diane Venora, Alfre Woodard, and Christopher Reeve head the cast in the eighth play in Joe Papp's Shakespeare Marathon. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

NEW THIS SEASON

All's Well That Ends Well—The Pearl Theatre Company's production of Shakespeare's comedy. (Pearl Theatre, 125 W. 22nd St. 645-7708. Closes March 18.)

Black and Blue—An evening of classic blues and jazz, conceived, designed, and directed by Claudio Segovia and Héctor Orezzoli, who created "Tango Argentino" in a similarly commemorative but far less visually opulent style. Musicians of renown have been assembled, and while Ruth Brown, Linda Hopkins, and Carrie Smith sing, Bunny Briggs, Jimmy Slyde, and a troupe of hoofers young and old give the tap-dance subculture a workout. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/6/89, under Dancing.) (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 246-0102.)

Born Yesterday—Madeline Kahn's performance as Billie Dawn (the role that made Judy Holliday famous) is the only good thing about this revival of Garson Kanin's 1946 political fable. Ed Asner is entirely inadequate as the scrap-metal tycoon who makes the mistake of hiring a *New Republic* writer to educate his mistress. So, unfortunately, is Daniel Hugh Kelly, who plays the journalist. (2/13/89) (46th Street Theatre, 226 W. 46th St. 246-0102.)

Brilliant Traces—Joan Cusack and Kevin Anderson are most winning in this new play by Cindy Lou Johnson, an offbeat romantic comedy that uses comic surrealism to call comic surrealism itself into question and say something about reality. (2/20/89) (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 989-2020. Closes March 12.)

Cafe Crown—A revival of the late Hy Kraft's mash note to the Café Royal, a onetime Mecca for Yiddish actors, writers, and intellectuals on the Lower East Side. The play, first produced in 1942, is filled with jokes, most of which pay off. Eli Wallach, as a former star, Anne Jackson, as his wife, and Bob Dishy, as a busy, bossy waiter, play the leading roles in this fine production, directed by Martin Charnin. Santo Loquasto designed the gorgeous setting. (11/14/88) (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 719-4099.)

The Cocktail Hour—A dramatist returns to his native city in upstate New York to break the news to his prosperous family that he has written a play about them and to ask their permission to have it produced. More easily said than done. A. R. Gurney's humor has never been more sparkling, his characters never more convincing or engaging. Under Jack O'Brien's direction, Nancy Marchand gives a marvellous performance as the hero's mother, and Holland Taylor, Bruce Davison, and Keene Curtis are fine, too. (11/7/88) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

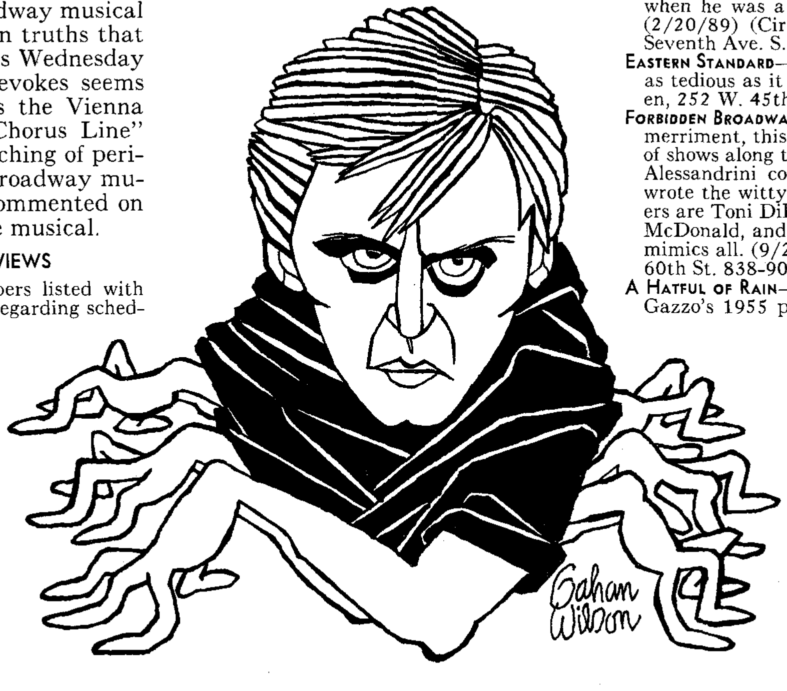
Dalton's Back—This one, by Keith Curran, is about a schoolteacher who can't engage happily in any human activity except back-tickling (the apostrophe in the title is possessive), because his mother gave him mixed signals when he was a child. Give it a wide berth. (2/20/89) (Circle Repertory Company, 99 Seventh Ave. S. 924-7100. Closes March 5.)

Eastern Standard—An imitation comedy that is as tedious as it is trendy. (11/14/88) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

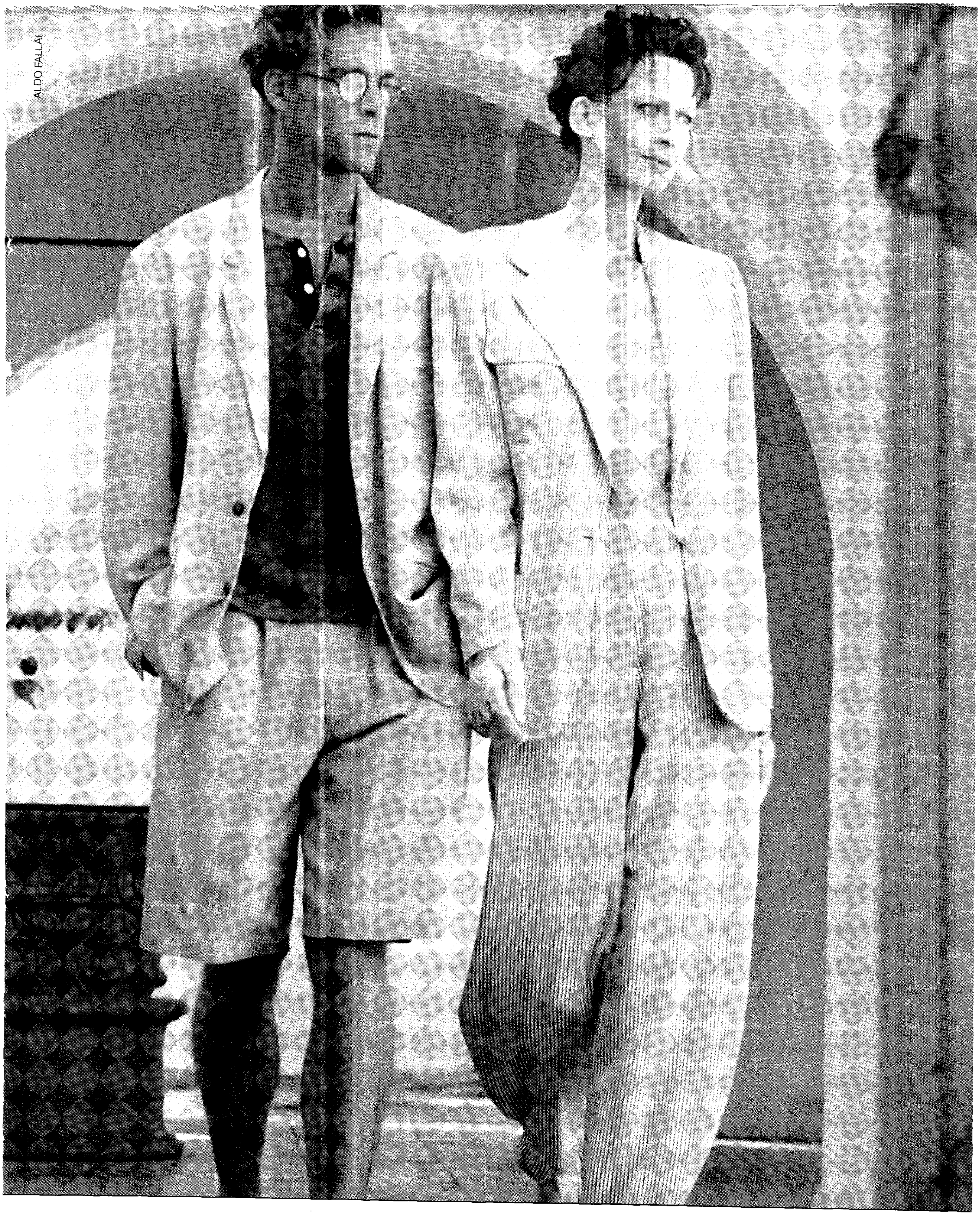
Forbidden Broadway 1989—A source of continual merriment, this revue is a cluster of parodies of shows along the Great White Way. Gerard Alessandrini conceived and directed it and wrote the witty, barbed lyrics. The performers are Toni DiBuono, Roxie Lucas, David B. McDonald, and Michael McGrath—inspired mimics all. (9/26/88) (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.)

A Hatful of Rain—A production of Michael V. Gazzo's 1955 play. (The Actors' Space, 250 W. 54th St., 757-5900. Closes March 12.)

The Heidi Chronicles—Wendy Wasserstein's new play looks at first glance like standard baby-boom play-writing fare, but some alchemical combination of graceful-mindedness and good writing enables her to capture, lampoon, and transcend her generation all at the same time. With a superb cast, led by Joan Allen. The show has moved to Broadway after a run at Playwrights Horizons; performances resume March 1. The official Broadway opening is



Mikhail Baryshnikov in "Metamorphosis"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THE THEATRE–Cont'd

March 9. (12/26/88) (Plymouth, 235 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

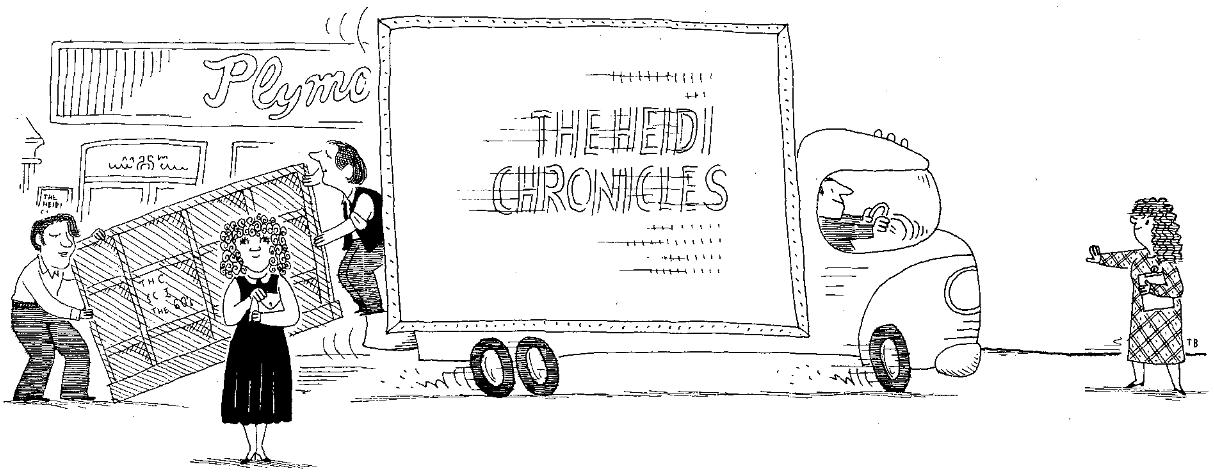
Henry V—Shakespeare's play, presented by the New Rude Mechanicals. (South Street Theatre, 424 W. 42nd St. Closes March 5. For reservations, call 971-5630.)

Hizzoner!—Tony Lo Bianco is the only actor in a play by Paul Shyre about Fiorello LaGuardia, mayor of New York from 1934 to 1945. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

I Could Go On Lip-Synching!—This one-man variety show made up of cultural arcana is kind of weird, kind of quirky, and kind of brilliant. Performed by John Epperson and written by him and Justin Ross (who directed), it uses the rhetorical tactics of drag theatre to attack some of the Big Questions, managing not so much to raise lip-synching to an art as to transform aural montage into psychodrama. Certainly this is the strangest show in town. (Theatre Off Park, 224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 627-2556.)

In a Pig's Valise—Eric Overmyer and August Darnell (better known as Kid Creole, of Kid Creole & the Coconuts) collaborated on this musical sendup of the Raymond Chandler school of hardboiled detective fiction. In spite of some wonderfully deadpan performances by Nathan Lane and Ada Maris, it's pretty sophomoric stuff. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103. Closes March 5.)

Jerome Robbins' Broadway—A retrospective of Robbins' non-ballet choreography. Expect excerpts from "Fiddler on the Roof," "West Side Story," and "High Button Shoes," to name a few. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)



"The Heidi Chronicles" moves to Broadway

Love's Labor's Lost—Shakespeare's comedy, set in the nineteen-thirties. William Converse-Roberts, Richard Libertini, P. J. Ochlan, Ronn Carroll, and Joseph Costa are in the cast; Gerald Freedman is the director. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

Macbeth—An in-the-round production of Shakespeare's play, directed by Nicholas Mahon. With Joseph Ziegler in the title role. (CSC, 136 E. 13th St. Closes March 11. For information about tickets, call 228-6621.)

Other People's Money—A comedy by Jerry Sterner about a Wall Street takeover artist who tries to acquire a small family business. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

Our Town—Spalding Gray's monotonous and cynical performance as the Stage Manager almost blights this revival of Thornton Wilder's masterpiece, but there is good work by Roberta Maxwell, Peter Maloney, Frances Conroy, and Eric Stoltz. (12/19/88) (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Rumors—This farce about a party to celebrate a couple's tenth anniversary (the host and hostess are mysteriously absent) may well be Neil Simon's funniest play. It is acted to perfection by Christine Baranski, André Gregory, Mark Nelson, Ron Leibman, Lisa Banes, Joyce Van Patten, Charles Brown, and Cynthia Darlow, under the impeccable direction of Gene Saks. (11/28/88) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

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Shirley Valentine—Pauline Collins gives a funny, beguiling performance as a Liverpool housewife who, feeling herself engulfed by drab domesticity, flies off to Greece, where she finds a temporary lover and lives happily ever after. Miss Collins is the only actor aboard, and she is backed every inch of the way by Willy Russell, who wrote the good play, and Simon Callow, who directed it. (2/27/89) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Songs of Paradise—A musical based on the works of the Yiddish poet Itsik Manger. In Yiddish and English; with a book by Miriam Hoffman and Rena Berkowicz Borow, and music by Rosalie Gerut. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

Sueños—A joint production by Mabou Mines and Intar of a work that celebrates the spirit of Latin America through poetry, music, and dance. Directed by Ruth Maleczech, with an original score by Herschel Garfein. In Spanish and English. (Triplex, 199 Chambers St. 618-1980. Closes March 5.)

The Taffetas—Four talented young women, impersonating a group of singing sisters, perform hits from the fifties. The show, conceived by Rick Lewis as a live broadcast from the early days of television, represents yet another trip down memory lane. Still, for what it is, it's very well done. With Jody Abrahams, Karen Curlee, Melanie Mitchell, and Tia Speros. (Top of the Gate, 160 Bleecker St. 982-9292.)

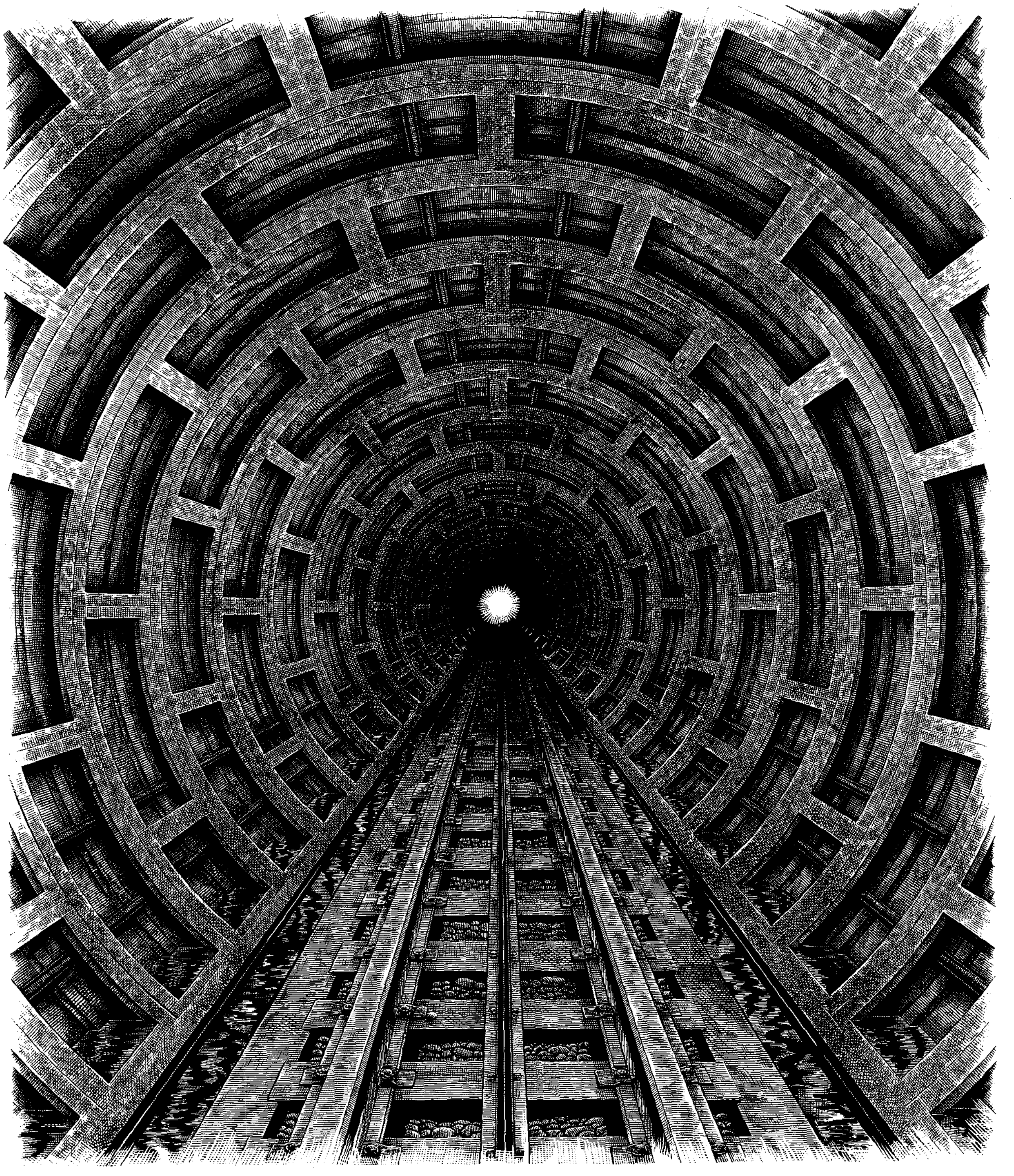
A Tale of Two Cities—Everett Quinton's over-the-top one-man version of Dickens' novel has Miss Pross literally hanging from the ceiling. Unfortunately, his performance is more spirited than it is consistently funny. Best is the word "BLOOD" scrawled on the bathroom wall. (Charles Ludlam Theatre, One Sheridan Square. 691-2271.)

LONG RUNS

ANYTHING GOES: This exuberant revival is primarily a celebration of Cole Porter himself. The company, which includes Patti LuPone, Anthony Heald, Bill McCutcheon, and Howard McGillin, does more than justice to the words and score. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.) . . . **CATS:** Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to the sets and costumes of John Napier. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.) . . . **A CHORUS LINE:** A group of young dancers audition for a handful of chorus jobs in a show not yet in rehearsal, and by the time the evening is over we know everything about all of them. (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.) . . . **DRIVING MISS DAISY:** Frances Sternhagen and Earle Hyman star in Alfred Uhry's play, which tells of the growing attachment of a cranky old woman in Atlanta to her black chauffeur. Directed by Ron Lagomarsino. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 564-8038.) . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running long run. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.) . . . **FRANKIE AND JOHNNY IN THE CLAIR DE LUNE:** Terrence McNally's enchanting comedy about sex and the sudden onset of love in an apartment on Tenth Avenue. With Bill Smitrovich and Caroline Aaron. (Westside Arts, 407 W. 43rd St. 541-8394.) . . . **INTO THE WOODS:** This musical by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine is an attempt to show what lurks beneath the surface of conventional fairy tales. The songs are beautiful and funny—sometimes both. Directed by Mr. Lapine. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 246-6363.) . . . **M. BUTTERFLY:** David Henry Hwang's funny, mysterious, and often beautiful play, with John Rubinstein and B. D. Wong. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 246-0220.) . . . **ME AND MY GIRL:** An infelicitously rehabilitated British musical out of the thirties. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 246-0102.) . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** The real stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.) . . . **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.) . . . **OIL CITY SYMPHONY:** Mike Craver, Mark Hardwick, Michelle Horman, and Mary Murfitt, gifted and sophisticated singers and instrumentalists, appear as a quartet of dedicated hicks reuniting at their small-town high school in this very funny musical. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330.) . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** The much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets (by Maria Björnson), everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.) . . . **SARAFINA!:** This South African musical, an explosion of talent, was conceived, written, and directed by Mbongeni Ngema, who also, with Hugh Masekela, composed and arranged the score. The acting, dancing, and singing are a wonder. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.) . . . **STEEL MAGNOLIAS:** This first play by Robert Harling is set in a beauty shop in a small town in Louisiana and consists mainly of the often amusing, wisecracking chatter of the proprietress, her assistant, and four steady customers. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 924-8782.)

DANCE

DAYBREAK, mild and chalky, at the shore; the first frost of the year in a field at midnight; a summer afternoon on Canal Street with traffic inching toward a lobster-red horizon—some moments would seem unreproducible in the theatre. But, as the songwriters tell us, everything that happens in life can happen in a show. In dancing, if you want weather, with



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all its transient poetry, you want a Merce Cunningham work designed by Mark Lancaster. Born in Yorkshire and trained as a painter at the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, Lancaster began designing for the Cunningham company in 1974; he became its artistic adviser, replacing Jasper Johns, and held the position until 1984, when he returned to England to concentrate on painting again. He left behind heartbroken fans and stage pictures that reverberate in memory: the autumnal "Quartet," the fleeting, lemony "Doubles," the rain-washed "Roaratorio," the incendiary "Trails," the floral "Duets," the stringently brilliant "Sounddance." He didn't decorate the stage, really. All you saw were dancers in simple practice clothes, moving in variable light. He just pulled nature out of color.

Lancaster continues to design the occasional work. This season, he's represented by his costumes and décor for the new, hour-long "Five Stone Wind." In preparing a première, Cunningham and his collaborators are typically in the dark about each other's plans until the productions are assembled in the theatre, but in the case of certain Cunningham-Lancaster works, such as the 1984 "Pictures," also in the rep this season at City Center, one is persuaded that the choreographer and designer were always in sympathy. Their communication may be telepathic, but the intelligence is real.

Merce Cunningham Dance Company—Feb. 28 at 7:30: The New York première of "Five Stone Wind," in which Mr. Cunningham will appear (the piece was seen here last summer as a work in progress); and "RainForest." . . . ¶ March 1 at 8: "Points in Space," "Cargo X" (New York première), and "Fabrications." . . . ¶ March 2 at 8: "Eleven" and "Five Stone Wind." . . . ¶ March 3 at 8: "Points in Space," "Pictures," and "Cargo X." . . . ¶ March 4 at 2: "Shards," "Septet," and "Pictures." . . . ¶ March 4 at 8: "Shards," "Septet," and "Fabrications." . . . ¶ March 5 at 3: "Points in Space" and "Five Stone Wind." . . . ¶ March 7 at 8: "RainForest," "Field & Figures" (New York première), and "Grange Eve." . . . ¶ March 8 at 8: "Eleven," "Field & Figures," and "Grange Eve." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907. Through March 12.)

The McGuire Sisters at Rainbow & Stars

Feld Ballet—Feb. 28 at 8: "Asia," "Kore," "Adieu," and "The Jig Is Up." . . . ¶ March 1 at 8: "A Footstep of Air," "Theatre," "Echo," and "Love Song Waltzes." . . . ¶ March 2 at 8: "The Consort," "Intermezzo No. 1," and "Skara Brae." . . . ¶ March 3 at 8: "Petipa Notwithstanding," "Shadow's Breath," "Cortège Parisien," and "Embraced Waltzes." . . . ¶ March 4 at 8: "A Footstep of Air," "Theatre," "Echo," and "Love Song Waltzes." . . . ¶ March 5 at 2: "Petipa Notwithstanding," "Shadow's Breath," "Cortège Parisien," and "Embraced Waltzes." . . . ¶ March 5 at 7:30: "A Footstep of Air," "Theatre," "Echo," and "Love Song Waltzes." . . . ¶ March 7 at 8: "Asia," "Kore," "Adieu," and "The Jig Is Up." . . . ¶ March 8 at 8: "Petipa Notwithstanding," "Shadow's Breath," "Cortège Parisien," and "Embraced Waltzes." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through March 12.)

Steve Krieckhaus—With a company of dancers, in "The Weatherfields," a new full-length work. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. March 2-4 at 8; March 5 at 3; and March 6 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

LATE the other afternoon, our valet awakened us and told us it was time to go to work. "It's almost night, sir," he said. So we slipped into our Air Jordans, put a toothbrush in our musette bag in case we got stranded somewhere, and headed out. Before we got too far, we heard a man on the street say, "And then that train came along and just swept her ass away." He was out of his mind, but for a second he sounded like a blues singer. Then, in a subway station, we heard a tall black man sing "Wonderful World"—the Sam Cooke number that starts "Don't know much about history . . ." He had a sweet voice and he sang the song—a C student's appeal to a girl's heart—earnestly. A little later, at the Knitting Factory, a big band led by a guy in tails played Mingus's lurching "Pithecanthropus Erectus" and then pretended that it was New Year's Eve and worked over "Auld Lang Syne." At the same place, on a different floor, a young woman read a poem entitled "I Like Boys from Hell." Then we wandered into a Wild West theme bar on Lafayette Street, where a cowboy movie was on TV and an R. & B. band called the Worms was trying to distract people from their drinks, the movie, and each other. Then we drifted north, to the Cat Club, where we saw a slide show featuring heavily accessorized heavy-metal guys and listened to an R.E.M.-like quartet called the Silos. The lead singer sang as if he had wads of cotton in his mouth; we couldn't make out a single word.

Had we spent the evening at, say, the Algonquin, listening to Margaret Whiting, we probably wouldn't have ended up in a Burger King at 1 A.M., drinking coffee and humming "Wonderful World." Probably we would have been at home, in bed, humming "Moonlight in Vermont."

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which bold-face type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—In the lobby, people come and go talking of the Forty-fourth Street Chowder and Marching Club, which used to meet here, and of Lerner and Loewe, who knocked out "My Fair Lady" here, and of the effusive, expansive **MARGARET WHITING**, who casts her voice to the four corners of the Oak Room Tuesdays through Thursdays at nine-fifteen and Fridays and Saturdays at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen. Dining.

Ballroom, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A big, soigné cabaret on the edge of Chelsea, in the heart of the fur and fashion-student districts. **YMA SUMAC**, the exotic Peruvian thrush with the big lungs and the grande-dame manner, performs at nine and eleven Tuesdays through Saturdays. At six-thirty Wednesdays through Saturdays, **JOHN WALLOWITCH**, a dapper, bespectacled gent, sings his celebrated number about a transvestite ("Bruce") and other songs satirical and sentimental.

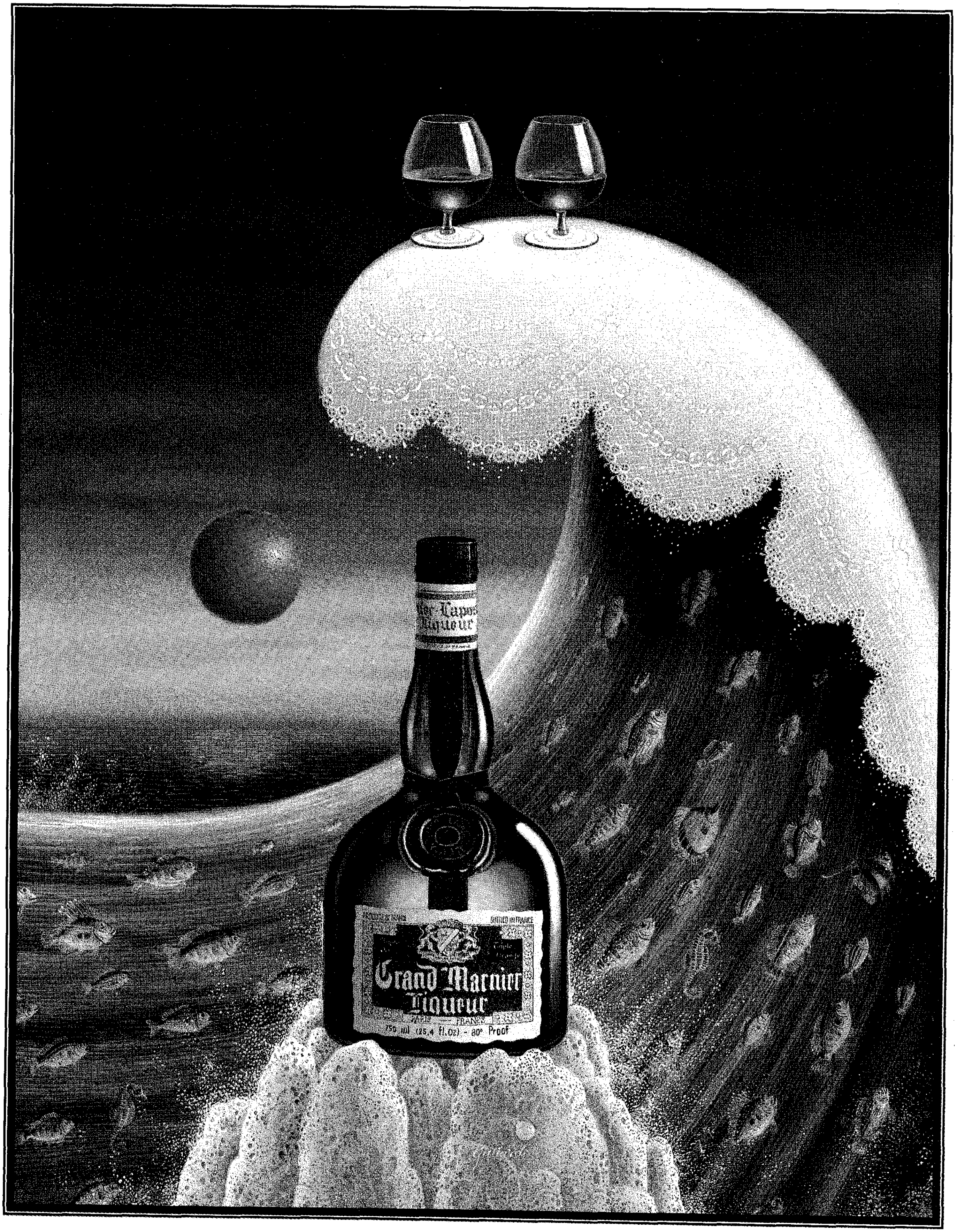
Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—A really blue but not really New York jazz club; the idea for the brass plaques that are engraved with the names of visiting jazz stars and embedded in the blue tables appears to have been borrowed from Hollywood. Pieces of a Dream, a Philadelphia pop-jazz trio, holds forth Feb. 28-March 5. First set at nine. Dining.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—On the east side of the building, behind a dusty display window, there's a New York *Post* review of a Santana concert that took place here circa 1978; curatorial neglect seems to have made it a permanent exhibit. Inside, it's Lower East Side rock-and-roll singer **WILLY DE VILLE** on March 2; the **DEL-LORDS**, a good Gotham rock band, on March 3; ex-Byrd **ROGER MC GUINN** on March 4; and the Irish folk group **DE DANANN** on March 7. Shows Sundays through Thursdays at eight and eleven, and Fridays and Saturdays at eight-thirty and eleven-thirty. Dining.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A neighborhood bar, tucked between a supermarket and a greengrocery. In 1969, when Bradley Cunningham and a partner bought it, it was called the Stirrup. Its light is distinctive, something between dim generic tavern light and refined haze; its patrons are famously gabby; its piano, which Paul Desmond bequeathed to Mr. Cunningham, has been played by many first-rate musicians, including Jimmy Rowles, Tommy Flanagan, and Dave McKenna. **JACK WILSON**, a bop-oriented pianist, works with bassist **PETER WASHINGTON** through March 4. Music from nine-forty-five. Dining.

EXPLOSIONS

"Grand Windows" is a group of eleven projects by artists, architects, and designers, mounted in vacant shops and shopwindows throughout Grand Central Terminal. At one site, the former premises of the Goldome, just east of the main concourse, the architect Michael McDonough has opened a window on the building's past with a narrative tableau entitled "The Tragic Circumstances of January 8, 1902/Crucible for the Grand Central Terminal to Come." The twelve-hundred-square-foot work recreates, in childlike cardboard cutouts, a disastrous train wreck beneath Park Avenue that boiled passengers alive. The accident provoked the State Legislature to ban steam engines in New York City, spurred Commodore Vanderbilt to construct the landmark terminal building, and ultimately sparked the explosion of real-estate development for blocks around.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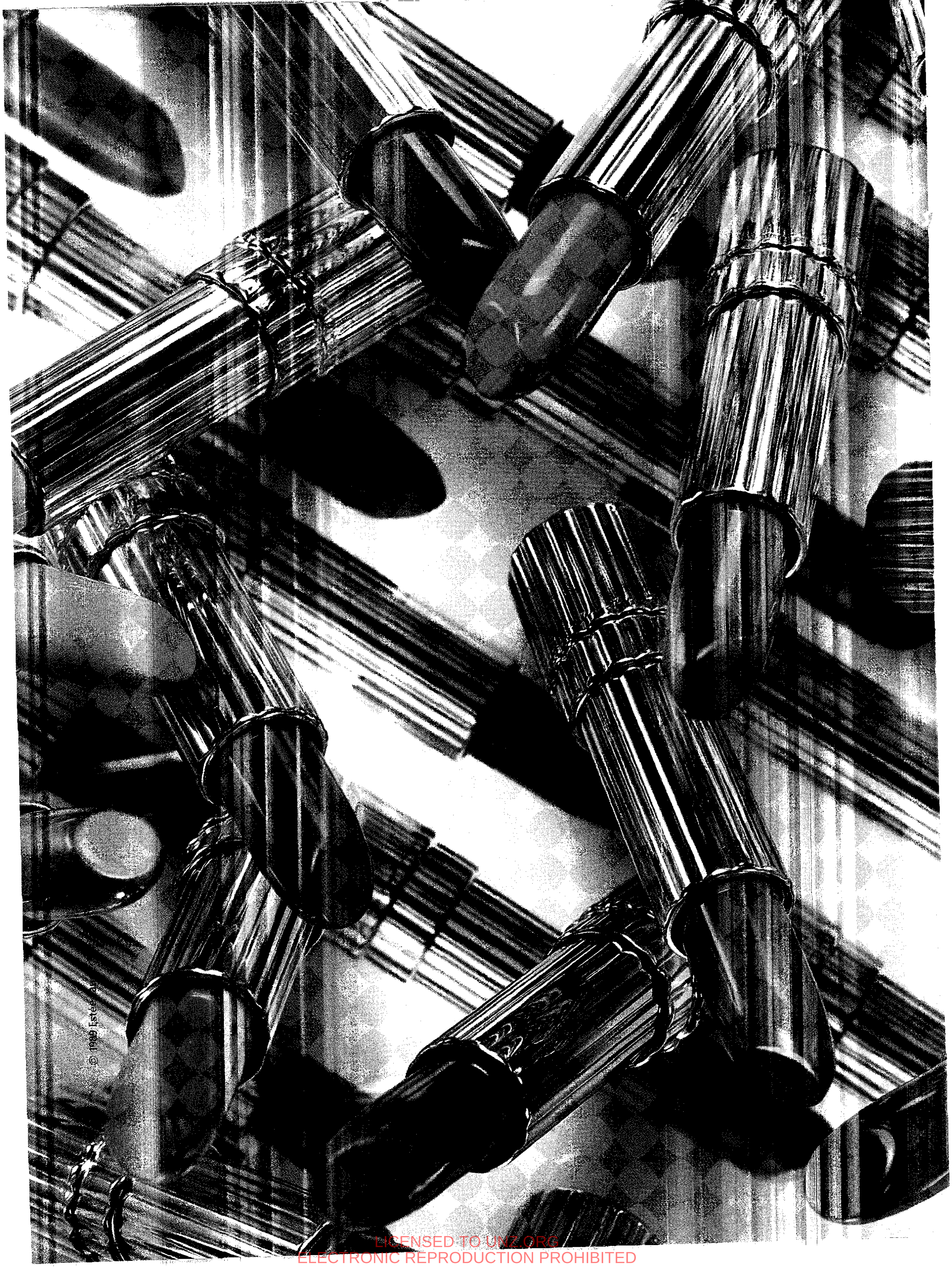

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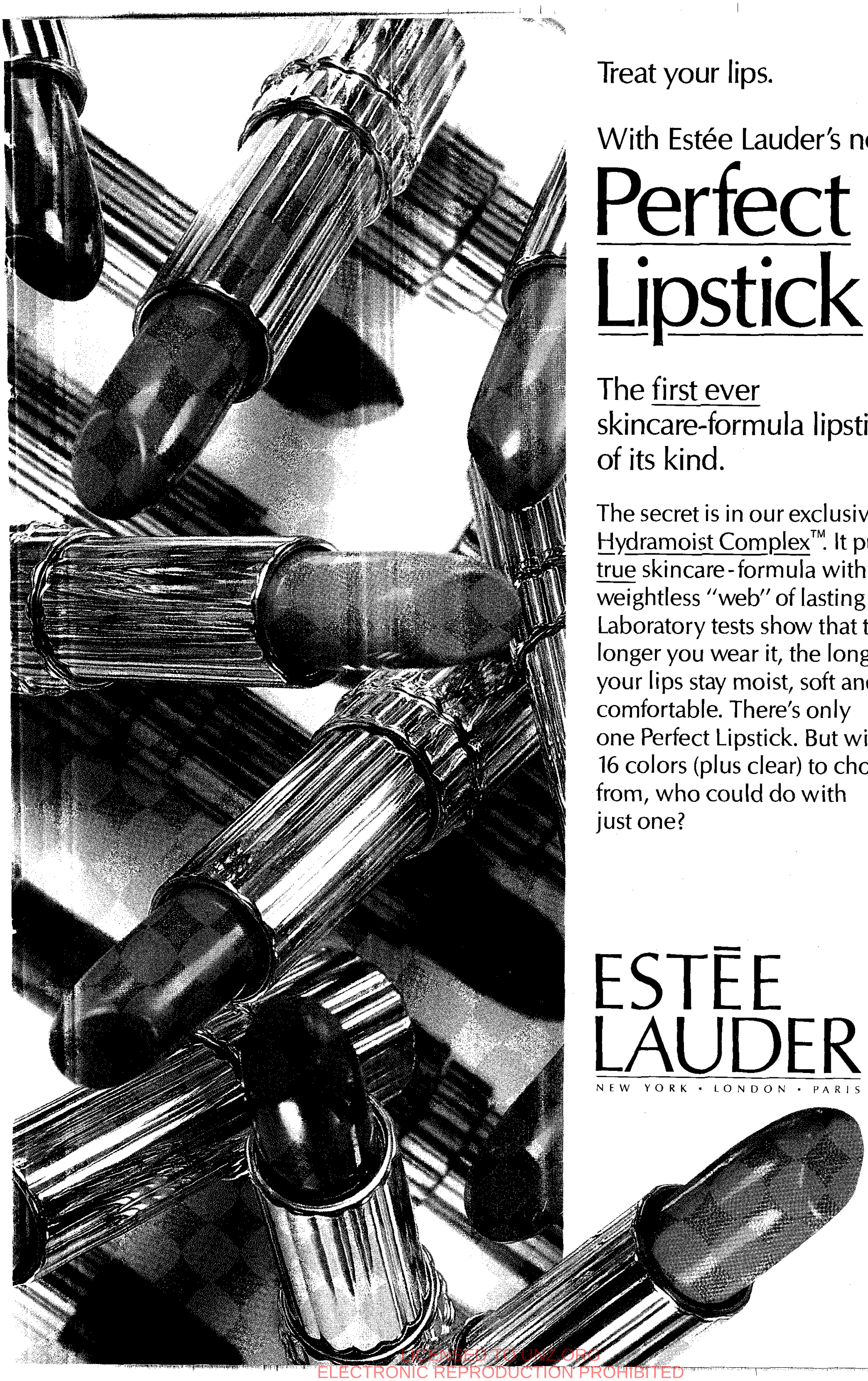

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NIGHT LIFE—Cont'd

Carlos I, 432 Sixth Ave., at 10th St. (982-3260)—The "great savory *pot au feu* called New York" (in the words of Duke Ellington) has loads of West Indian restaurants, but not too many that feature name-brand jazz bands. **AL GREY,** a big-band veteran who gets laughing sounds and deep wa-was and complete sentences out of his old talking trombone, leads a quartet Feb. 28-March 5. Music from nine-thirty.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a small, well-upholstered room decorated with quaint Marcel Vertès murals (a nude at her easel, a leaping poodle), is a place where time pretty much stands still. The most prominent seat in the house has been taken over by pianist Peter Nero. Shows at ten and midnight Tuesdays through Saturdays.

Cat Club, 76 E. 13th St. (505-0090)—This room, which caters to thrash-metal buffs and cooler heads on weeknights, opens its doors on Sundays to swing-music fans, most of whom come to Lindy. The dancers are young, old, semi-pro, one hundred per cent amateur, happy, earnest, in love; shoe styles (men's) run from white bucks to clodhoppers to gleaming patent-leather jobs. On March 5, **VINCE GIORDANO,** a young, slick-haired devotee of music before bebop, takes his polished big band, the **NIGHTHAWKS,** through "Blue Lou" and "Air Mail Special" and "Tuxedo Junction." Music from eight to midnight.

Eagle Tavern, 355 W. 14th St., at Ninth Ave. (924-0275)—An Irish pub in the meat-packing district, not too far from the boondocks. The back room, which is trimmed with seaworthy things, has Hibernian music on Fridays and native string-band sounds on Saturdays. Helicon, a Baltimore trio led by flutist Chris Norman, has the floor March 3; on March 4, Akira Satake, a banjo and dobro picker, leads a group of locally based bluegrass players.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—There's not a lot of elbow- or headroom in this downstairs jazz club, but the musicians sometimes make you forget all about it. Alto saxophonist **PHIL WOODS,** a hard-blowing, true-blue follower of Charlie Parker, directs a quintet Feb. 28-March 5; on March 7, **RON CARTER,** the rangiest bassist in town, arrives with his nonet (his usual two-bass quintet swelled by a quartet of cellists). On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL,** the Thomas Edison of reverb, leads a trio. Music from eight. Dining.

Fortune Garden Pavilion, 209 E. 49th St. (753-0101)—A satisfying combination of Chinese food and homegrown music. Rubberneckers may see the moon wheeling by the greenhouse roof on its regular tour of romantic Manhattan. **TED ROSENTHAL,** a young Manhattan School of Music graduate and the winner of the Second Annual Thelonious Monk International Jazz Piano Competition, performs Feb. 28-March 2; **JAY LEONHART** is on bass. **DICK HYMAN,** who has a great fund of old popular music at his fingertips, plays March 3. Music from eight Mondays through Saturdays, and from seven on Sundays.

Indigo Blues, 221 W. 46th St. (221-0033)—A new jazz club, in the basement of the Hotel Edison. It's awash in blue neon, and has a fancy sound system and a shiny dance floor. Miles Davis, who had not played a note in a New York night club since 1975, christened this room. Trumpeter **JACK WALRATH,** a Mingus alumnus whose song titles ("Ray Charles on Mars," "Black Bats and Poles," "Monk on the Moon") and unquiet style are in the Mingus tradition, will be here with his six-piece **MASTERS OF SUSPENSE** Feb. 28-March 5. Mondays are claimed by a big band run by pianist **TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI.**

Knitting Factory, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—A second-floor retreat (attained by passing through a downstairs restaurant) that features avant-garde jazz, advanced and unadvanced rock, and miscellaneous weird sounds. It has a slapped-together, homemade look, and, judging by the S.R.O. crowds, it is a thriving enterprise. **BOBBY PREVITE,** the preëminent drummer in downtown jazz circles, works with multi-instrumentalist **MARTY EHRLICH** and bassist **MARK HELIAS** on March 1. On March 2, **SHELLEY HIRSCH,** who makes many curious sounds with her experimentalist's voice and makes some of them curiouser still by altering them electronically, teams up with three guys whose musical vocabularies aren't traditional.

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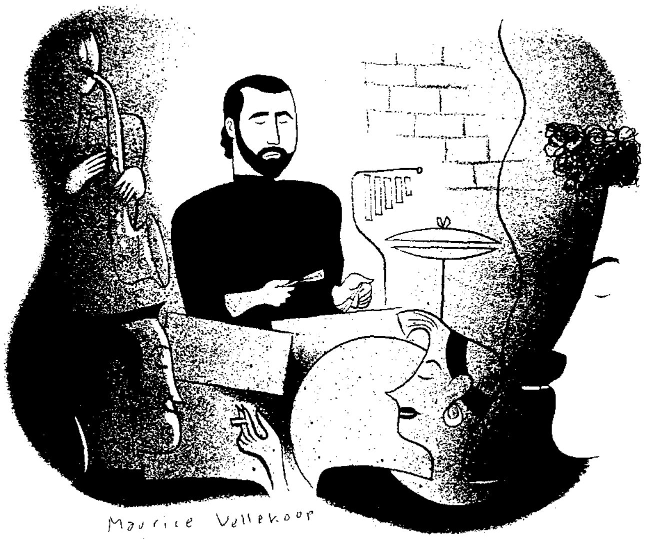
EUGENE CHADBOURNE, a locally trained combination of protest singer, C. & W. nut, and avant-garde guitarist-noisemaker, has the floor March 3-4. Chadbourne, who plays something called a lap steel rake in addition to guitar, and has in his wardrobe a coat with mousetrap epaulets (to catch the gag mice running all over it), is at his most inspired when he's twitting the powerful (hear his "Ollie's Playhouse," about the Iran-Contra deal), but he's not unfunny when he's taking apart something like "Eight Miles High" or "Ramblin' Man." Music after nine.

Lone Star Café, 61 Fifth Ave., at 13th St. (242-1664)—**DON COVAY,** the veteran soul singer who wrote "Chain of Fools" and "Seesaw," is the main attraction of this cramped Yankee version of a Texas honky-tonk. He's here on March 3. Music after nine. Hot vittles.

Lone Star Roadhouse, 240 W. 52nd St. (245-2950)—The midtown branch of the aforementioned establishment. The façade is a Silver Eagle bus, the kind your itinerant musician cat tools around in. The inside features some stuff you probably wouldn't find in a county-line roadhouse—like a wallful of de-luxe Gibson guitars—and some you might expect to find: beer, neon beer signs, and men wearing dozer caps. **VASSAR CLEMENTS** fiddles on March 1; on March 2, which is known in Texas and here as Texas Independence Day, wise-guy-country-singer-turned-mystery-writer **KINKY FRIEDMAN** and playwright-songwriter **LARRY L. KING** lead the cheers for the former Republic. Music after nine. Dining.



Bobby Previte at the Knitting Factory

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—A new, glossy, multilevel maroon-and-silver cabaret, seating about ninety, and located on the north side of the sixty-fifth floor, in what used to be the cocktail lounge. The performers, working in a shallow well in the center of the room, do unwitting battle with the bejewelled backdrop of Central Park, Lenox Avenue, the G. W. Bridge, and points north. The **MC GUIRE SISTERS,** who look almost as girlish as they did thirty-five years ago, resurrect some of their hits from the fifties. Shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine and eleven-fifteen. Dining. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

Speakeasy, 107 Macdougal St. (598-9670)—The site, many moons ago, of Rienzi's, a coffeehouse on the beaten path; nowadays, it's home to folkies, bluegrass fiddlers, lonesome cowboys, and a stray rock person or two. **PETER STAMPFEL,** the co-founder of the antic sixties garage-folk group known as the Holy Modal Rounders, performs on March 4. Shows nightly from about eight-thirty. Dining.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—**JIM HALL,** a guitarist who always comes in on tiptoe and departs the same way and in between fills the air with soft, beautiful sounds, will be in this Village temple of jazz (pressed-tin ceiling, grainy b. & w. photos of your favorite demigods, knee-to-knee seating) with a quartet Feb. 28-March 5. The electrified big band that the late Gil Evans brought here on Mondays—it shimmered a little and rumbled a lot, while Evans, a hands-off conductor, let his soloists blow at length—is now fronted by his son, trumpeter Miles Evans, and directed by trumpeter **LEW SOLOFF** and pianist **GIL GOLDSTEIN,** and is in action on Feb. 27. Shows from ten. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—People from all over the world descend the stairs to this ancient jazz club; many of them later emerge from it in an excited condition. **BOBBY WATSON,** a Kansas-born alto saxophonist who spent time in Art Blakey's organization and plays a blue streak, leads a quintet Feb. 28-March 5. Mondays are prime time for **MEL LEWIS'S** big band. Music from ten.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—If you like pictures of cows, there's a good one here, by the painter Malcolm Morley, of some Holsteins adrift in a Turneresque landscape. There's also jazz, which flows peaceably from a passageway between the front-room bar and the back-room restaurant. **JANE JARVIS,** who spent many years accompanying the Mets on the Shea Stadium organ, concentrates nowadays on the piano; she'll be here through March 4, with bassist **MILT HINTON,** who got his first steady job in 1929, with a combo led by a four-hundred-pound pianist named Tiny Parham. Music weeknights from eight, and Sundays from seven.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

IT happens but one evening a month. After ten, the city's air vibrates, the tide of traffic shifts. People you thought you knew dress up and do strange things. Meteorologists needn't double-check their calendars; the full moon remains on March 22nd. For anyone who's recently thought a rubber skirt was flattering, cultivated the growth of his sideburns as he would a flat of orchid cuttings, or admitted that he's still not got over the first closing of Studio 54, Susanne Bartsch's last-Thursday-of-every-month disco extravaganza at the Copacabana is the night the circus comes to town, Mardi Gras, and Brigadoon all rolled into one.

During those few hours, all other club loyalties are abandoned. For many who spend all day in preparation, the evening at the Copa is a rare trip uptown. Most are unaware of the historical significance of the place—this is where one once paid a lot to sit ringside to hear Sinatra. In fact, the majority of the current Copacetics couldn't even see "Saturday Night Fever" when it first came out without being accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. Their attraction to this bi-level dance palace—its disco in Polynesian-airport décor, with Ms. Bartsch's platformed dancers and her choice of entertainers—is prompted neither by camp nor by nostalgia. Undoubtedly, some of the lure is the cultlike status of Ms. Bartsch's "parties" (though when you add the crush

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

NIGHT LIFE—Cont'd

of people inside to the overflow outside, clogging 60th Street traffic, you may wonder where the cutoff for a cult is). Yet the young Copa crowd is equally enticed by the thrill of experiencing disco for the first time. It's all new to them. As for disco emeriti, here is an opportunity to benefit from the current penchant for recycling eras faster than we rotate tires, as well as the satisfaction of knowing that, as doorman Gene Krell says, "disco has become as much a part of Americana as country-Western." Then why ration it to once a month? "That's part of what makes it work," smiles Krell.

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY
PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

"MARY SURRATT"—Part Four of Linda Mussman's six-part "Civil War Chronicles." (Whitney Museum of American Art at Equitable Center, 787 Seventh Ave., at 51st St. March 2 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

DAWN EGAZARIAN—A performance artist who plans to meet her audience in front of Franklin Furnace and whisk them away somewhere. (112 Franklin St. March 4 at 2. No tickets necessary.)

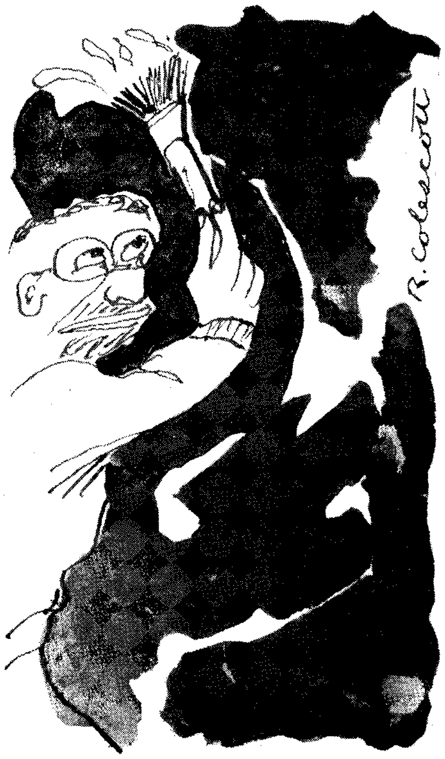
"THE MUSIC ROOMS"—A work by Maryanne Amacher, incorporating music, sculpture, and video. (Paula Cooper Gallery, 155 Wooster St. 674-0766. March 7 at 8.)

ART

THE Met's show of Renaissance paintings from Siena, on view through March 19th, is, first of all, gorgeous, but it is also a triumph of art-historical detective work and diplomacy. It includes a sweep of preternaturally vivid narrative panels for altarpieces by the great and influential Sassetta, which are here reassembled for the first time in centuries. There is also an entire roomful of works, not seen together until now, by the more mysterious Giovanni di Paolo, who is familiar to museumgoers through a small and very potent painting, "The Creation, and the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise," usually on view with the Lehman Collection. It is a work often cited by those who like to find glimpses of modernism in the past, because its concentric, cosmic orb is a dead ringer for the target paintings of Kenneth Noland. The big revelation of this exhibition, however, is an artist known only as the Master of the Osservanza, whose identity has been debated almost as much as Shakespeare's. The young Sano di Pietro, also in the show, has most often been cast in the Francis Bacon role. Yet this Master's style seems starker than Sano's, and his intensely precise, surreal vision seems nothing if not singular. His Descent into Limbo, for example, describes the miseries of exclusion in terms that even the most secular of strivers will understand, and his Resurrection is an amazingly compact, eloquent symbol for what may be the twin conditions of aestheticism and faith.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—The Sienese Renaissance paintings and manuscript illuminations. Through March 19. . . . ¶ All the Ingres works in the collection (ten paintings, twenty-two drawings, and seven prints) have been put on view together. The Met's holdings tend to reflect this great neoclassical artist's most conservative side. Exceptions include the portrait of the "Princesse de Broglie" (1851) and one small sheet of reclining male nudes. Through March 19. . . . ¶ Photographs from William Henry Fox Talbot's "Pencil of Nature." (See Photography, below.) Through April 9. . . . ¶ From the vague and documentary to the laughably impressionistic to the corny and moonlit, Frederick Remington's paintings of Indians chasing cowboys, his lacklustre illustrations for *Harper's*, and his clichéd bronzes of riders on horseback are unworthy of serious attention by a major art museum. Through April 16. . . . ¶ The Costume Institute is exhibiting eighty-five outfits from the Victorian era. Through April 16. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Tuesday evenings until 8:45.)



Self-Portrait: Robert Colescott

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—The Andy Warhol retrospective. Through May 2. (A listing of the films in the exhibition can be found under Film Libraries, below.) A complementary show of Warhol work is at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, 31 Mercer St. . . . ¶ A show of architectural design—models, drawings, and photographs of buildings—by Emilio Ambasz and Steven Holl, two of today's more compelling talents. Through April 4. . . . ¶ Walker Evans' works. (See Photography.) Through April 11. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Refigured Painting: The German Image": A haphazard onslaught of Expressionism which attempts to make sense of German painting today but desperately needs editing in some areas and amplification in others. Artists like Lupertz look better than ever here, while important figures like Richter and Polke look trivial. Worth a visit if only to see the majestic Wright building filled with the aggressive air of an art fair. Through April 23. (Open Tuesdays, 11 to 7:45, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 4:45.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—For all his inventiveness and creativity, Frederick Kiesler has remained relatively obscure since his death in 1965. This eye-opening retrospective is a chance to take a fresh look at his work, including a reconstruction of the Surrealist room in Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery. Through April 16. . . . ¶ A show of American folk art from the center in Williamsburg, Virginia, that is named for Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. The landmark collection, started in the twenties, identified and brought to public attention such painters (all represented here) as Ammi Phillips, Erastus Salisbury Field, and John Brewster, Jr. Also, carvings, furniture, textiles, and pottery. Through April 2. . . . ¶ A selection of sculptures from the sixties by Yoko Ono, with new bronze casts beside the originals. Ono's works, conceived for audience participation, are now displayed in glass cases. Concurrently, films and videos by Ono are on view on the second floor. (See Film Libraries, below, for schedule.) Through April 16. (Open Tuesdays, 1 to 8, with no admission charge after 6; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway.—Sculptures, drawings, and maquettes by four American post-minimalists: Joel Fisher, Mel Kendrick, Robert Lobe, and John Newman. Forty-six objects altogether are on display. Through May 15. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 10 to 5.)

American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, Broadway at 155th St.—A hundred paintings and sculptures by twenty-nine artists who have been nominated for Academy-Institute art awards. Among the candidates are Lisa Lawley, Rackstraw Downes, and Stephen De Staebler. Starts Feb. 28. (Open daily, except Mondays, 1 to 4.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—Finnish art objects made of wood; a loan show from Helsinki's Museum of Applied Arts. Through April 23. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Grolier Club, 47 E. 60th St.—Intaglio prints by American landscape painters who learned how to etch plates and print them at the New York Etching Club in the eighteen-eighties. Among the artists who found a love for the medium were William Merritt Chase, Frank Duveneck, and Mary Nimmo Moran. Through April 1. (Open daily, except Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—An exhibit examining the ways in which artists have found inspiration in the golem legend. Through April 2. (Open Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, noon to 5; Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—A show of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century drawings from Haarlem's Teyler Museum focusses attention on the contrasting purposes of Northern and Southern European draftsmanship. Through April 30. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—"Celebrating George," a show reflecting New Yorkers' changing attitudes toward President Washington. The memorabilia range from costumes worn to the Inaugural Ball here in 1789 to the September, 1988, cover of *Money*, which depicts Washington holding investment-performance graphs. Also on view are a piece of jewelry purportedly containing a lock of Washington's hair, photographs of the Washington Square Arch and the George Washington Bridge, and a 1962 pencil portrait by Roy Lichtenstein. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—More than a hundred oils, watercolors, prints, drawings, and sculptures by National Academy artist-members, thirty-three of whom were awarded prizes. Through March 26. (Open Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

The New Museum, 583 Broadway—A retrospective of paintings by the appropriationist/social critic Robert Colescott. Through April 16. The Phyllis Kind gallery, 136 Greene St., has a complementary show. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, noon to 8.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Jean Hélion—A full sampling of watercolors from the thirties which traces the unsung Hélion's transition from Constructivism to Surrealism. Some of the Constructivist works contain the geometric mapping by which their compositions were determined. Through April 1. (Rachel Adler, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St.)

Jasper Johns—Of the images for which Johns is primarily known, the maps remain the most elusive. The dealer Larry Gagosian has opened his new, luxe space dramatically with this immaculate historical view of all but one of Johns' map paintings. Through March 25. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St.)

Joan Miró (1893-1983)—A pleasant, informal assortment of drawings, paintings, sculptures, and ceramics by this master of austere whimsy. Through March 25. (Perls, 1016 Madison Ave., at 78th St.)

Frank Stella—These painted reliefs, part of the "Waves" series, are marvels of stylized vitality, with each piece seeming to burst out of its tondo-shaped frame and strike a pose. Andy Warhol's printer tones are a possible influence on Stella's colors, which are looking more modulated and acid than before. Through March 2. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St.)

Ignacio Zuloaga (1870-1945)—John Singer Sargent admired this Spanish artist, and this show includes a number of charming portraits of proper Bostonians dressed up as *majas* out of Goya. Zuloaga was everything Picasso did not want to be. Through April 28. (Spanish Institute, 684 Park Ave., at 68th St. Open Saturdays.)

"Mayakovsky and the Book"—This display of books by the great Russian Futurist poet Mayakovsky includes some of this century's most brilliant experiments with typography—designed in the teens and twenties by Rodchenko, Lissitzky, Stepanova, and many others—as well as pamphlets aimed at the proletariat. Through March 26. (MJS Books & Graphics, 9 E. 82nd St. Perhaps the only gallery in New York where they offer to hang up your coat. Opens at noon.)

"The Persistence of Painting"—The second in a series of four exhibitions on abstraction. Much of it looks good, especially the surfaces of Nancy Haynes, the compositional simplicity of Harvey Quaytman, and the organic richness of Bill Jensen. Through March 10. (Hunter College Gallery, Lexington Ave. at 68th St. Opens at 1; closed Saturdays.)

Group Show—Works by female sculptors who are reconsidering the female form; Alison Saar, Mary Ann Unger, and Nancy Fried are among them. Through March 25. (Sculpture Center, 167 E. 69th St.)

GALLERIES—57th STREET AREA

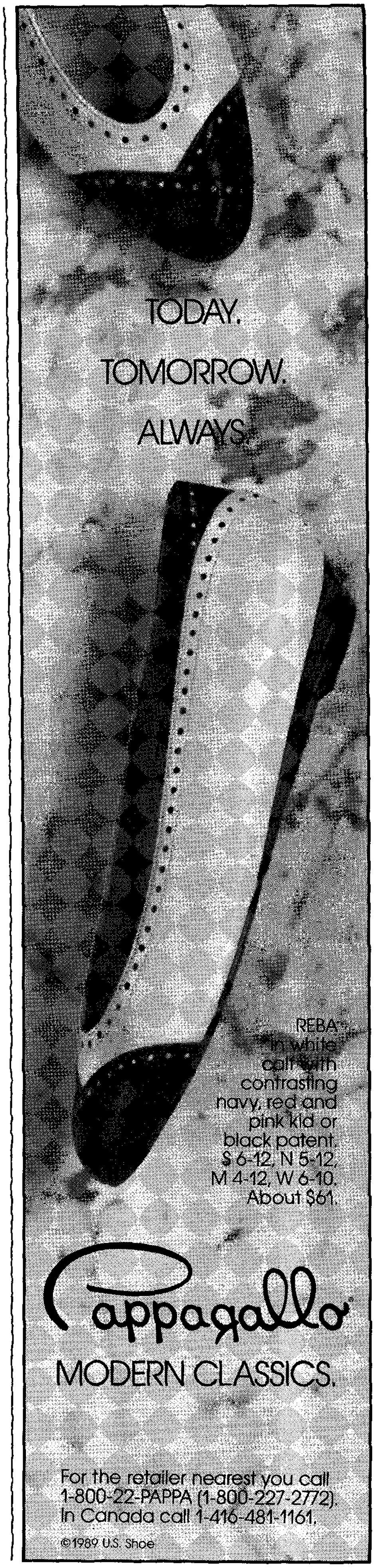
Ronald Bladen (1918-88)—Before he made his significant contribution to postwar sculpture, Bladen was an accomplished, if somewhat derivative, painter. These, his last paintings, date from the late fifties, and look much like the work of Al Held, his friend and, at the time, his studio-mate. Bladen's appealing departure here is fistfuls of crusty paint. Through March 12. (Washburn, 41 E. 57th St.)

Red Grooms—These watercolors were made by the artist during his travels, and while most seem like little more than conventional vacation illustrations, a few have his dynamic bombardment of color, with every inch active and craving attention. Through March 8. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Jerry Kearns—Paintings with movie- and record-biz titles, such as "To Have and Have Not" and "Earth Angel." Easy, obvious political sentiment in the form of slick, Pop-ish art. Through March 4. (Kent, 41 E. 57th St.)

Robert Kushner—Even with his wonderfully bizarre sense of color and uncanny ability to make the garish seem regal, there's a sadness and a sense of frustration to these paintings of large flowers. Through March 11. (Holly Solomon, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Robert Motherwell—Motherwell, who made a major contribution to the art of the fifties, has suffered from a tendency to repeat himself endlessly in his paintings. While the same could be said of his drawings, which are the subject of this show, they have a grace of line, a calligraphic delicacy, and a power of



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ART–Cont'd

form which connoisseurs of drawing will appreciate. Through March 4. (Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St.)

Hermann Nitsch—From the land that brought you Freud come large paint- and blood-splattered canvases, ritual tables, and liturgical vestments—the remnants of performances directed by this leading practitioner of body art, in which sheep were sacrificially disembowelled. The effect is surprisingly satisfying. Through March 11. (Luhring Augustine, 41 E. 57th St.)

Antoni Tàpies—As the art world embraces all things Spanish, here's an opportunity for an in-depth view of recent work by the most accomplished of Spain's postwar artists. Using a characteristic palette of browns, grays, and blacks, Tàpies gouges archetypal images directly into thick paint cracked like old asphalt or into smooth surfaces coated with marble dust. (Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St., through March 18; and 112 Greene St., through March 11.)

Niele Toroni—This significant European painter's work is relatively unknown here, and in reproduction it appears deceptively guileless and self-indulgent. But his simple method of dabbing paint at regular intervals, on walls, canvas, and paper, is responsive to the Goodman gallery's architecture, and has a subtle power and odd beauty. Through March 4. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Sidney Janis 40th Anniversary Exhibition—An exquisite installation of works by Mondrian, Léger, Giacometti, and Arp which pays tribute to the master art dealer Sidney Janis, who exhibited each of them in decades past. Through March 11. (110 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Short List—**isabel bishop,** Midtown, 11 E. 57th St. (through March 31), and Cole, 200 W. 57th St. (through March 4); **larry brown,** Lamagna, 50 W. 57th St. (through March 18); **john chamberlain,** Pace, 32 E. 57th St. (through March 25); **robert cronin,** Gimpel, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through March 4); **terence la noue,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. (through March 18); **robert lobe,** Blum Helman, 20 W. 57th St. and 80 Greene St. (through March 4); **matta,** Herstand, 24 W. 57th St., open Mondays (through March 25); **louisa matthiasdottir,** Schoelkopf, 50 W. 57th St. (through March 8); **abraham walkowitz,** Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St., open Mondays (through March 25).

GALLERIES—SoHo

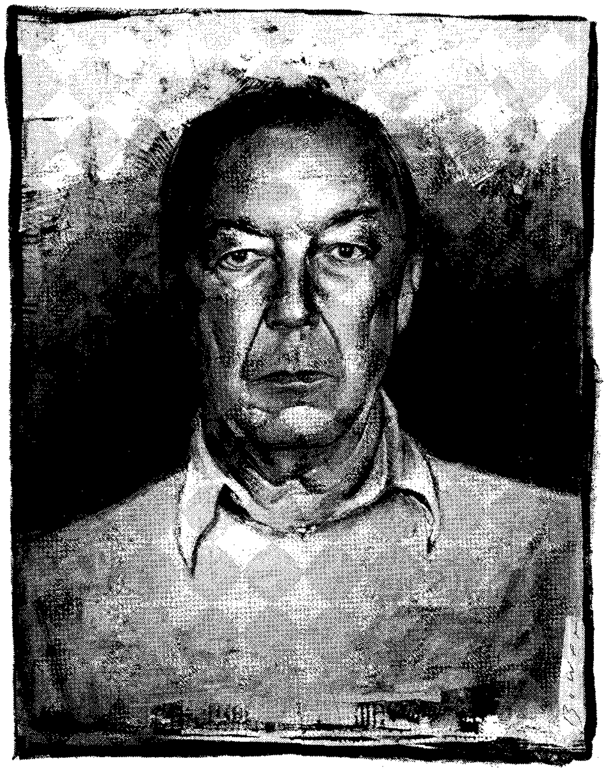
Joseph Amar—An ambitious exhibition of mixed-media sculptures and reliefs by an intelligent young artist with a strong feel for materials, who, right now, is busy attending to large sophistic questions. In short, he is retreading the work of others. The others include, most obviously, Jasper Johns, Joseph Beuys, and Jannis Kounellis. This show inaugurates the Cutler gallery's big new space. Through March 1. (593 Broadway.)

Louisa Chase—Gashes in smudged white paint, which reveal black beneath, and artfully balanced red, yellow, and blue rectangles reside on the same canvas—an odd cohabitation that works. Through March 11. (Alexander, 59 Wooster St.)

Robert Colescott—Colescott can fit more bawdy attacks on racism, sexism, greed, violence, and gluttony onto a single canvas than some curators can fit into an entire exhibition. By abandoning his signature parodies of art-historical masterpieces, he gives his works a new narrative power. Through March 9. (Kind, 136 Greene St. A retrospective is at The New Museum.)

Gloria Friedmann—A burnt-wood icon, animal skins spotted with pinesap, a bone embedded in a stretched bullhide—these minimal sculptures display an uncommon sensitivity to materials and are elegant to the point of suffocation. Through March 4. (Marcus, 578 Broadway.)

Kristin Jones and Andrew Ginzel—A technically impeccable mixed-media installation titled "Ecclesia," composed of three separate pieces. Each evokes the occult or the alchemical; two offer very fetching optical illusions. This talented pair is in some danger of becoming a sophisticated magic act for kids. Through March 4. (Brandt, 568 Broadway.)



Jasper Johns

Marilyn Lerner—There are some fine aspects to these oddly shaped geometric paintings—they look like a cross between universal signs and Fisher-Price toys—but their wholes fail to equal the sum of their parts. Through March 4. (Good, 532 Broadway.)

Michael Loew (1907-85)—Academic modernism is not in short supply this month. Loew was an agreeable minor master of a neoplastic painting style that owes a lot to Mondrian but that doesn't have much bite. Through March 11. (Pearl, 420 West Broadway.)

H. James Merrell—An ostentatiously strong smell of oil paint in a gallery puts some in a reverential mood and makes others suspicious. Merrell rakes the viscous stuff sideways across his two-plane canvases in layers, producing lush colors—mostly red, orange, purple, and brown—along with the sense that he is after the Greenbergian grail. Through March 18. (Penine Hart, 568 Broadway.)

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All you need is a driver who speaks your language.

Ann Messner—Domestic mischief fills the air in these accomplished sculptures; some of them—a metal ironing board propped against the wall, a television tube sheathed in lead—have a quiet wackiness. Through March 4. (Fawbush, 568 Broadway.)

Steve Miller—There's something both repulsive and compelling about these computer-assisted, electronic-age Rorschach paintings. Like video screens, they come complete with lines of static. Through March 4. (Fiction-Nonfiction, 21 Mercer St.)

Dennis Oppenheim—After a protracted period of unevenness, Oppenheim is back with work more delightfully demented than ever. An endless column of green wine bottles with happy faces etched into them rises in the Plumb gallery; two pairs of horses made of yellow plastic tennis balls and wired to spin around look like a geneticist's piñata; and a group of deer have gentle flames at the tips of their antlers. Through March 11. (81 Greene St.)

Blinky Palermo (1943-77)—Prints from the early seventies. Palermo was a rebel with an anti-authoritarian cause, and since his mysterious death, at the age of thirty-four, he has become both a romantic cult figure and a real influence for many younger artists here and in his native Germany, including Julian Schnabel and Gunther Förg. He worked out many of his ideas about emotional minimalism and non-rational systems most lucidly in his prints, and this elegant show is an excellent, if modest, introduction for those still unfamiliar with his work. Through March 15. (Newburg, 580 Broadway.)

Michelangelo Pistoletto—The least challenging of the Italian Arte Povera artists, Pistoletto seems to have made a few good pieces and subsequently spent several decades redoing them—without the pointed repetition of a Reinhardt or a Warhol. Nonetheless, occasionally he shakes off his perfumed artiness, as with his sculpture of a dog garden ornament staring at itself in a huge mirror—a droll reflection on today's art culture. Through March 4. (Gorney, 100 Greene St.)

Marica Prešić—Titled "Vertical Escape," this tiny gallery's show consists of two tall structures of painted canvases mounted on wood. The thinner piece includes some dangling red cord, and both works imply a tough, spare, futuristic sensibility. This artist, from Yugoslavia, is to be watched. Through March 4. (Stark, 568 Broadway. Opens at noon.)

David Rabinowitch—The windows, door, and walls of Barbara Flynn's new European-style gallery were designed to accommodate the sculpture on view. The result is a tall, beautiful, volumetric, minimal echo chamber with five large minimal sets of concentric rings carved directly into the plaster walls by this veteran minimalist. Through April 29. (Flynn, 113 Crosby St.)

Martha Rosler—"Home Front" is the first of three installations to explore and expose the complex history and dire problems of housing in New York City. It includes a reconstitution of a Chinatown tenement kitchen-with-tub, a wide variety of polemical art works by different artists, and elaborate documentation. Town meetings are also planned. (The first is on Feb. 28, at 6:30, at 155 Mercer St.) Rosler, known for her carefully researched, politically trenchant performances and videos, organized all of this. She has a brilliant, legalistic mind and a wry sense of humor and showmanship. Through March 14. (Dia Art Foundation, 77 Wooster St. Opens at noon.)

Lucia Salemme—A small and rather sweet overview of oils, watercolors, and prints from the nineteen-forties through the eighties. This artist, the author of primers on color and composition, comes across essentially as a teacher. Her landscapes and cityscapes reveal many of the lessons of Cézanne-derived modernism, and her palette is a little cloying. Through March 4. (Teller, 568 Broadway.)

Margo Sawyer—Three new sculptures made of welded steel, copper, brass, and silk, including an unusual low-hanging ceiling piece, in this artist's promising first solo show in New

York. A Levantine sensuality tempers these otherwise gruff-looking metal armatures and gives them the appearance of being baubles for Vulcan. Through March 18. (Toll, 146 Greene St. Sawyer's sculpture can also be seen at P.S. 1 until March 12, and at Socrates Sculpture Park, in Long Island City, through March.)

Robert Stackhouse—Walking between the two parts of this evocative slat sculpture is pleasant enough, but the real pleasures here are huge watercolors of cobras and Viking ships, which add dimension to the sculpture. Through March 4. (Dolan Maxwell, 154 Wooster St.)

Marianne Stikas—Ribbons of paint, most of them in a regal red, that might have been applied with a squeegee. Some of them look tasty enough to lick—but not to eat. Through March 4. (Davis, 568 Broadway.)

Ernest T.—One of the more interesting and amusing of a new generation of French artists, Ernest T. creates endless variations on a pattern painting of interlocking "T"'s, reminiscent of designer bags. Some paintings he hangs on the wall, others he incorporates into blown-up cartoons with captions that jab at originality and commercialism, and still others he arranges in and around a fitted case that looks as if it's being unpacked. Through March 9. (Brown, 560 Broadway.)

Cy Twombly—Twelve paintings, one drawing, and two painted wood sculptures, all from 1951 and 1953, some from the collection of Robert Rauschenberg. This is restrained, assured work for a young artist, but then composure has always been Twombly's cardinal sign. The paint used is house paint, and the sculptures are especially guileless. Through March 18. (Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St.)

Emilio Vedova—The first solo exhibition in New York for this important Italian artist (who turns seventy this year) includes paintings from 1982 to 1988. Most are very large and tondo-shaped. Several are freestanding and painted on both sides in the artist's usual expressionistic grisaille. Vedova likes his work to be theatre. Through April 1. (Ala, 560 Broadway.)

Andy Warhol (1930-87)—Sculptures, along with some photographs of Warhol taken by Christopher Makos. Through March 18. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St. A retrospective can currently be seen at the Museum of Modern Art.)

Patrick Weidmann—A mute and lifeless display of composite art works made of frames, doorknobs, mirrors, frieze paintings, and black-and-white photographs, fastidiously arranged in rectangular groupings. Through March 11. (Gibson, 568 Broadway.)

David Wojnarowicz—This poignant attempt by a young artist to come to grips with AIDS transcends the sensationalistic documentation that characterizes most AIDS-inspired art. While the paintings and the photographs are the most powerful politically ("I'm carrying this rage like a blood filled egg," he prints over one painting), the small sculptures seem the most self-reliant as art. Through March 4. (P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway.)

Short List—**donald baechler,** Shafrazi, 163 Mercer St. (through March 25), and Kasmin, 580 Broadway (through March 23); **george dudding,** Bietzel, 113 Greene St. (through March 25); **mary grigoriadis,** A.I.R., 63 Crosby St. (through March 11); **jane hammond,** Exit Art, 578 Broadway (through March 25); **vincent longo,** Condeso-Lawler, 76 Greene St. (through March 11); **steven parrino,** Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St. (through March 18); **cliffton peacock,** Germans van Eck, 420 West Broadway (through March 7); **jeff pullen,** Dorsky, 578 Broadway (through March 4); **joseph raffael,** Hoffman, 429 West Broadway (through March 22); **helen miranda wilson,** Sorkin, 596 Broadway (through April 1).

OTHER GALLERIES

Buffie Johnson—The artist grew up on a private island in New York Harbor, studied with Picabia, and was good friends with Jane and Paul Bowles. These portraits from the thirties and forties have a charm and simplicity all their own. Through March 4. (56 Bleecker Street Gallery.)

Ouattara—The influence of the primitive spirit on modern artists has been the focus of study for nearly a century, but here's an opportunity to examine the opposite: a Senoufo tribesman from the Ivory Coast turned hip artster. The result is a predictable dreamy Expressionism, like that of American Mimmo Palladino. Ouattara paints images of shields, masks, and stylized statuary and applies small African sculptures and animal horns to them. Bizarre, but the cross-pollination is a healthy sign. Through March 11. (Baghoomian, 611 Broadway.)

P.S. 1—The "Secret Pictures" of Hilma af Klint, on loan from Stockholm. . . . ¶ Also, "Theatergarden Bestiarium," a confused and pretentious exhibition of scale models and installations by thirteen European and American artists on the theme, possibly, of the ways art could be exhibited in the future. Through March 12. (46-01 21st St., Long Island City. Opens at noon Wednesdays through Sundays.)

Group Shows—At the **burgin,** 270 Lafayette St.: "Seeing Is Believing," a pleasant small exhibit, showing the irreverent side of conceptual art. It includes Bruce Nauman's photographs of himself making faces; his early videotapes, with William Allan, providing a lesson in carp fishing; and some of Ed Ruscha's great book works, unfortunately encased in glass, like relics. Through March 15. . . . **80 washington square east galleries,** New York University: The annual small-works exhibition, juried by Allan Frumkin. Through March 3. (Open Tuesday evenings until 7.) . . . **white columns,** 325 Spring St., at Greenwich St.: "About Devices" is a low-key show of work in various mediums by little-known, mostly younger artists. The "device" in question suggests rocket capsules and certain pronged lighting fixtures, and may be found in all their work. An O.K. scouting expedition, but not really "about" much at all. Through March 11. (Opens at noon.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Robert Adams' photographs, currently on view at the Burden Gallery, have no glamour whatsoever. Trees (many of them), homes lit up at night, people and cars in shopping-mall parking lots, new housing developments, roads, fields, mountains, valleys—his pictures could seem boring, like a drive on the throughway in winter. They offer no escape into another world, no opportunities for voyeuristic titillation, no celebrities. Adams is after something plainer—the landscape that does not become a postcard, the people of this country whom politicians would describe as "ordinary"—and he presents it in impeccable black-and-white prints.

Although Adams chooses subjects that seem familiar, there is something unsettling about his photographs. They make you feel anxious the way a Hitchcock movie does. They have the same aura of doom, the sense that at any moment life can be altered by something terrible. In fact Adams' work is a warning, and a prayer. He takes Ansel Adams' conservation mission into contemporary reality, where a nuclear weapons plant is a background detail of life in a suburban community. But whereas Ansel Adams fought for the preservation of land in the American West by producing romanticized, dramatic photographs of national parks—areas protected from the bulldozers—Robert Adams photographs unprotected people and places. For a quiet show, this one makes a lot of noise.

Ellen Brooks—New works. This artist uses a sophisticated screening process and computerized color to create flamboyantly cold, blurred, beautiful, and fashionable variations on the themes of artifice, emptiness, and nature morte. Through March 15. (Nosei, 100 Prince St.)

Walker Evans (1903-75)—Looking at Evans' work is always a pleasure. However, this exhibition feels like an extra pleasure—a

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

Keith Jarrett . . .

homecoming. It includes most of the images in “American Photographs,” the 1938 MOMA Evans publication that has now been reissued by the museum. Evans’ “Torn Movie Poster” and his photographs of signs resonate with the work of his downstairs neighbor at the museum, Andy Warhol. (Museum of Modern Art.)

Adam Füss—The second room of this show is where Füss’s experimental work comes alive and you find his prodigious use of color. His photograms exist simultaneously as beautiful abstract works and as microscopic details of substances that appear mysterious until inquiry reveals them to be quite commonplace—water, powder, seaweed. Through March 11. (Audiello, 142 Greene St.)

Josef Koudelka—Nothing Koudelka does should be sneezed at. His photographs have an intelligence and a way of catching and creating moods, yet they’re lifeless. People and views come off as still-lifes. Here are his signature Gypsies, as well as more recent pictures—panoramas—which appear burdened by an ambition to be heavyweights. Through March 4. (Pace-MacGill, 11 E. 57th St.)

William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-77)—Full of the excitement of a new invention, this exhibition of Talbot’s “Pencil of Nature”—the first book ever to include photographs—is the place to go to celebrate the beginning of photography. Talbot’s sense of the medium’s impact on art, and more generally on how the camera affects the way we see the world, turns out to have been on the button. Through April 9. (Metropolitan Museum.)

“Women/Men”—There are many terrific pictures here, including a treat for Weegee fans, but this exhibition, with its teasing title, forces them into what often feels like a false framework. A Kertész that is more about snow falling on a sculpture than about women is just one example of how little the title has to do with what’s on the walls. Through March 31. (Seagram Building, 4th floor, 375 Park Ave., at 52nd St. Open Mondays; closed Saturdays.)

Group Shows—At the **pfeifer,** 568 Broadway: Ten contemporary Belgian photographers. Through March 9. . . . **ralph,** 43 E. 78th St.: Prints by women photographers who started their work in the twenties and thirties—Berenice Abbott, Imogene Cunningham, Doris Ulmann, and others. Through March 4.

Short List—**robert adams,** Burden, 20 E. 23rd St., opens at noon (through March 18); **ilse bing,** French Institute–Alliance Française, 22 E. 60th St. (through March 4); **manuel alvarez bravo,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway, opens at noon on Saturdays (through April 1); **lee friedlander,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. (through April 8); **brian oglesbee,** Lieberman & Saul, 155 Spring St., opens at noon on Saturdays (through March 4).

MUSIC

Young Concert Artists is an organization that picks career-bound performers and speeds them up a little bit with promotion, management (for a few years), and a New York recital. Susan Wadsworth, who runs the operation, has a very good track record. Y.C.A. recitalists are known for their unruffled technical command, lively personalities, and—usually—conservative, safe programs. One can hear a great deal of Ravel’s “Tzigane,” Beethoven’s “Waldstein,” approved Chopin favorites, and the like on their concerts.

It is therefore a matter of unusual interest to see that Anthony de Mare, a pianist from Buffalo, is scheduled for a Y.C.A. recital at the 92nd Street Y on February 28th with a program of Douglas Young, Frederic Rzewski, Conlon Nancarrow, Charles Ives, Aaron Kernis, and (light gasp) Meredith Monk. Advocacy not just of twentieth-century music, this, but of *contemporary* music. (We sometimes forget that they aren’t the same thing; the century is not young anymore.) One supposes that Mr. de Mare had to be *really* good to get himself picked doing repertoire like this; it raises expectations.

A familiar new-music advocate, the soprano Lucy Shelton, turns to older twentieth-century classics at Tully Hall on the first of March. Her program is called “The Path from Pierrot”; it includes the inestimably influential “Pierrot Lunaire” of Schoenberg, along with works influenced by it, or related to it in some way, by Ravel, Stravinsky, and Maurice Delage.

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**la bohème,** with Fiamma Izzo D’Amico, Carol Neblett, Placido Domingo, and Paolo Coni; conducted by Nello Santi. (Feb. 27 at 8, and March 4 at 1:30.) . . . With Kallen Esperian, Carol Neblett, Placido Domingo, and Paolo Coni; Nello Santi. (March 8 at 8.) . . . **idomeneo,** with Carol Vaness, Marvis Martin, Susan Quittmeyer, and Timothy Jenkins; David Stivender. (Feb. 28 at 8.) . . . With Kay Griffel, Marvis Martin, Frederica von Stade, and Siegfried Jerusalem; David Stivender. (March 3 at 8; final performance of the season.) . . . **salome,** with Eva Marton, Helga Dernesch, Richard Cassilly, Neil Rosenshein, and Bernd Weikl; Marek Janowski. (March 1 at 8.) . . . With Katarina Ekonomu, Helga Dernesch, Richard Cassilly, Neil Rosenshein, and Bernd Weikl; Marek Janowski. (March 4 at 8:30.) . . . With Eva Marton, Helga Dernesch, Graham Clark, Mark Baker, and Bernd Weikl; Marek Janowski. (March 7 at 8.) . . . **werther,** with Kathleen Kuhlmann, Dawn Upshaw, Neil Shicoff, and Bernd Weikl; Jean Fournet. (March 2 and March 6 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

Opera Orchestra of New York—Eve Queler conducting Bellini’s “Il Pirata,” with Aprile Millo, soprano; Giuseppe Morino, tenor; Paolo Coni, baritone; other vocalists; and the Pro Arte Chorale. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. March 6 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 362-1911; for Avery Fisher Hall 874-2424; for Carnegie Hall 247-7800; for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719; and for the 92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St., 415-5440. Other box-office numbers are included in the listings.)

. . . plays Bach

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall. March 2 at 8, March 3 at 2, and March 4 at 8: Kurt Masur conducting a Prokofiev-Strauss program, with Philip Myers, horn. . . . ¶ March 7 at 8: Felix Kruglikov conducting a Brahms-Prokofiev-Strauss program. Also with Mr. Myers.

Boston Symphony—Seiji Ozawa conducting, with Maurizio Pollini, piano, in an all-Brahms program. (Carnegie Hall. March 1-2 at 8.)

London Symphony Orchestra—Michael Tilson Thomas conducting. At Avery Fisher Hall, March 3 at 8: Music by Stravinsky, Ravel, and Rachmaninoff. . . . ¶ At Carnegie Hall, March 5 at 8: Music by Knussen, Prokofiev, and Mahler. With Vladimir Feltsman, piano.

Bavarian Symphony Orchestra of Munich—Colin Davis conducting. At Avery Fisher Hall, March 5 at 8: Works by Sibelius and Mussorgsky. . . . ¶ At Carnegie Hall, March 7 at 8: Works by Prokofiev, Stravinsky, and Beethoven. With Dmitry Sitkovetsky, violin.

Columbia University Orchestra—George Rothman conducting, among other works, the *première* of Hayes Biggs’ “Fanfare.” (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. March 3 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

New York Chamber Symphony—Trevor Pinnock conducting, with Randall Ellis, oboe. (92nd Street Y. March 4 at 8.)

New York Choral Society—John Daly Goodwin directing a performance of Mendelssohn’s “Elijah,” with Ben Holt, baritone, in the title role. (Carnegie Hall. March 5 at 3.)

Rinat Choir of Israel—Stanley Sperber directing. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 5 at 7.)

RECITALS

Shanghai String Quartet—Playing works by Haydn, Debussy, Bartók, and Webern. (92nd Street Y. March 1 at 8.)

New York Chamber Ensemble—With Lucy Shelton, soprano, in a program of music influenced by Schoenberg’s “Pierrot Lunaire.” The Schoenberg work, with an English translation by Andrew Porter, will be performed. (Alice Tully Hall. March 1 at 8.)

Jubal Trio—Performing two New York premières in its only recital here this season. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 1 at 8.)

New World String Quartet—Playing works by Elliott Carter, Henri Dutilleux, and Janáček. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. March 1 at 8.)

Amara Ensemble—With the American Brass Quintet, a mezzo-soprano, and a tuba player, in a concert of classical and contemporary American works. (St. Peter’s Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. March 2 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Omega Ensemble—Chamber music. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 2 at 8.)

Waverly Consort—Performing Italian songs by early baroque composers. (Alice Tully Hall. March 2 and March 4 at 8.)

Beaux Arts Trio—In works by Ravel, Haydn, and Schubert. (Carnegie Hall. March 3 at 8.)

Antonio Meneses and Cecile Licad—Cello and piano, husband and wife. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. March 3 at 8.)

Jessye Norman—Soprano, with assisting artists. (Carnegie Hall. March 4 at 8.)

Guarneri Quartet—In a program of works by Mozart, Barber, and Ravel. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. March 4 at 8.)

Mendelssohn String Quartet—Performing string quartets by Beethoven, Schumann, and Bartók, but not by Mendelssohn. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 4 at 8.)

"Seven Last Words of Christ"—The string quartet version, with Alexander Schneider and Isidore Cohen, violin; Steven Tenenbom, viola; and Laurence Lesser, cello. Schuyler Chapin will narrate. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. March 5 at 2. For information about tickets, call 741-5689.)

New York Philharmonic Ensembles—Performing works by Johann Joachim Quantz, Carl Nielsen, Stravinsky, and Ravel. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 5 at 3.)

Christopher Parkening—Classical guitarist. (Alice Tully Hall. March 5 at 3.)

Composers String Quartet—Playing works by Mozart, Mel Powell, and Beethoven. With assisting artists. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. March 5 at 3.)

Music Before 1800—Presenting the first American performance of Alessandro Stradella's "Santa Pelagia," an oratorio commemorating St. Pelagia the Penitent. St. Pelagia, previously an actress and courtesan named Margaret, decided, after her conversion, to dress like a man and live like a monk on the Mount of Olives. (Corpus Christi Church, W. 121st St., just east of Broadway. March 5 at 4. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)

Keith Jarrett—Harpsichord, playing Bach's Goldberg Variations. (Alice Tully Hall. March 5 at 7:30.) . . . **note:** On March 6 at 5:30, Mr. Jarrett will give an informal talk. (Alice Tully Hall. For tickets, call 874-6770.)

Yefim Bronfman and Shlomo Mintz—Violin and piano, in Brahms' Sonatas 1, 2, and 3. (Avery Fisher Hall. March 5 at 8.)

Tatiana Troyanos—Mezzo-soprano. (Alice Tully Hall. March 6 at 8.)

Maria Radicheva—Violin, in a benefit concert. (New York University Theatre, 35 W. 4th St. 998-5278. March 6 at 8.)

Jeffrey Siegel—Playing and talking about the piano music of Mussorgsky. (92nd Street Y. March 7 at 8.)

Music Today—With Faith Esham, soprano, and Stephen Burns, trumpet. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 7 at 8.)

Edmund Niemann and Nurit Tilles—Duo piano. (Third Street Music School Settlement, 235 E. 11th St. March 8 at 7:30. *No tickets necessary.*)

Arditti String Quartet—Presented by Composers Forum, and performing contemporary works. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. March 8 at 7:30.)

Jean-Pierre Rampal—Flute. (Carnegie Hall. March 8 at 8.)

Andrew Rangell—Piano, in the fifth of his seven concerts devoted to the Beethoven sonatas. (92nd Street Y. March 8 at 8.)

Eugene Bondi—Cello. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 8 at 8.)

JAZZ / ROCK / POP / PERSONAL APPEARANCES

Gipsy Kings—These French superstars are a six-member acoustic-guitar troupe (sometimes augmented by percussionists) who play traditional Gypsy folk songs with wild abandon. They sing in a number of languages, stomp their feet, clap their hands, and strum those guitars like a caravan on fire. A night of irresistible flamenco rock—you'll be in acoustic-guitar heaven. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. March 2 at 8.)

B. B. King—The Itta Bena, Mississippi, native swings into town with his longtime collaborator Lucille (a Gibson guitar) and a seven-piece band. King, who has been performing for more than forty years, sometimes seems to watch the clock during his shows, but his guitar playing still defines the blues. The soul-jazz team of Jimmy McGriff (organ) and Hank Crawford (alto sax) will open. (Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 864-0372. March 3 at 8 and midnight.)

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Van Morrison—Like the great poker-faced bluesmen, Van Morrison looks withdrawn onstage: he closes his eyes, cups his hands around his harmonica, and staggers and shudders in time to the music. Born in Belfast and influenced by American soul, blues, and country music, Morrison is the originator of the rough, romantic, lost-in-America-with-my-baby sound that Springsteen and Seger *popularized with their anthems. But you* may find that the legendary Morrison is sweeter, bluer, tried and truer. (Beacon Theatre. March 5 at 2 and 8, and March 7-9 at 8. The March 5 concerts are benefits.)

Joan Jett—Lunt-Fontanne Theatre, 205 W. 46th St. 575-9200. March 1-4 at 8, and March 5 at 7.

Metallica—Byrne Meadowlands Arena. 1-201 935-3900. March 1 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Nassau Coliseum. 1-516 587-9222. March 8 at 7:30.

Major Holley—With Dick Hyman and Lyn Christie. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. March 3 at 6. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Abbey Lincoln, Geri Allen, and Steve Coleman—Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. March 4 at 8.

Frank Patterson—Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 757-3100. March 4 at 8.

Mark Helias—Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. March 4 at 8. No tickets necessary.

A Night of Great Movie Music—Marvin Hamlisch, Henry Mancini, David Raksin, and others will lead the American Symphony Orchestra through portions of movie scores. Catherine Deneuve, Charlton Heston, Robert Redford, and others with famous mugs will host the program, which benefits Redford's Sundance Institute. (Avery Fisher Hall. 874-2424. March 6 at 7:30.)

Patti Bown—St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. March 8 at 6. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.

George Lewis—*Alternative Museum, 17 White* St. 966-4444. March 8 at 8.

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Knicks—Facing the Heat with Kiki Vandeweghe—whom Mark Jackson called "a heckuva basketball player"—and his famous outside shot. . . . ¶ Vs. the Miami Heat, March 2. . . . ¶ Vs. the Chicago Bulls, March 4. . . . ¶ Vs. the Phoenix Suns, March 7. (Game time: 7:30.)

Nets—Vs. the Utah Jazz, Feb. 27. . . . ¶ Vs. the Charlotte Hornets, March 2. . . . ¶ Vs. the Boston Celtics, March 4. (Game time: 7:30.)

Rangers—Vs. the Los Angeles Kings, Feb. 27. . . . ¶ Vs. the Toronto Maple Leafs, March 1. . . . ¶ Vs. the Boston Bruins, March 5. . . . ¶ Vs. the Buffalo Sabres, March 8. (Game time: 7:30.)

Islanders—Vs. the Hartford Whalers, Feb. 28. . . . ¶ Vs. the Boston Bruins, March 7. (Game time: 8:05.)

Devils—Vs. the Boston Bruins, Feb. 28 at 7:45. . . . ¶ Vs. the Rangers, March 3. . . . ¶ Vs. the Minnesota North Stars, March 5 at 5:05.

Mets, Yankees—All players must report for spring training by March 1. And now the fun begins: Will a middle-aged Tommy John actually win a place on the Yankees' pitching squad? Will Lenny Dykstra and Mookie Wilson have to share center field at Shea? *Will Rick Aguilera leave the Mets' mound?* Forget about "Thirtysomething"—these days the real drama is on the diamonds down South.

(Home base for the Rangers and the Knicks is Madison Square Garden, 563-8300; for the Islanders, the Nassau Coliseum, 1-516 587-9222; and for the Devils and the Nets, the Byrne Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

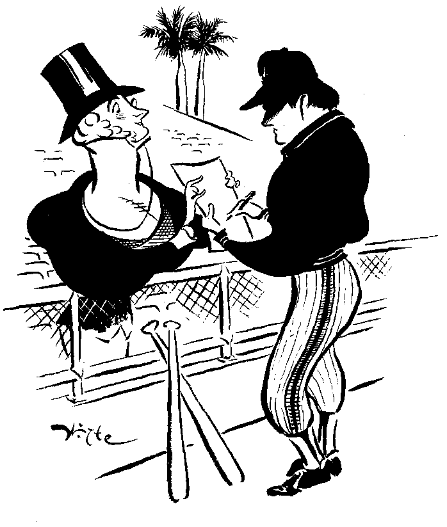
Hep Cats—Five hundred felines from around the world will compete in the fifth annual International Cat Show. For this fifteen-ring beauty pageant, judges prowl around each contestant in search of fatal flaws—a kinky tail, say, or an errant ear. And while dog-show judges tend to keep to themselves, you'll find that their cat-show counterparts like to chat with the audience about their findings. (Madison Square Garden Exposition Rotunda, Seventh Ave. at 32nd St. March 3 from 3 to 9; March 4 from 9 to 6; March 5 from 9 to 6.)

Garden Parties—The last thing you'd expect to stumble upon in early March is forty-two gardens in full bloom, but that's exactly what you'll stumble upon at the New York Flower Show. This year's show includes offerings from the New York Botanical Garden and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. (Pier 92, Twelfth Ave. at 52nd St. March 4-12. Weekdays, 10 to 8; Sundays, 10 to 6.) . . . ¶ Gertrude Jekyll spent almost as much time in the darkroom as she did in her perennial border. More than a hundred photographs that she took of her own gardens in Munstead Wood can be seen at the PaineWebber Art Gallery through May 5. (Sixth Ave. at 51st St. Mondays through Fridays, 8 to 6.)

Spring Armory Antiques Show—Seventy-five dealers fill the 7th Regiment Armory with armchairs, telescopes, bronze and marble busts. (Park Ave. at 66th St. March 2-4, from 11 to 9:30; March 5, from 11 to 6.)

Readings—Veronica Geng, Calvin Trillin, Fran Lebowitz, and Roy Blount, Jr., will read from their work in a tribute to Robert Benchley. (The Columns, 584 Broadway. March 1 at 8. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Roger Angell and A. Bartlett Giamatti hosting "The First Pitch of the New Season," a selection of baseball writings read by Stephen Lang, John Rubinstein, Fritz Weaver, and others. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. March 1 at 6:30.) . . . ¶ Harold Brodkey reading, talking, and screening the American Playhouse film adaptation of his story "First Love and Other Sorrows." (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. March 1 at 8. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Margaret Atwood, Michael Ondaatje, and Bharati Mukherjee read from their latest work. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. March 2 at 8.) . . . ¶ Stockard Channing and Frances McDormand in a benefit reading of Flannery O'Connor's stories and letters. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. March 6 at 8. For information about tickets, call 645-5848.) . . . ¶ Joyce Carol Oates, Bob Shacochis, Rebecca McClanahan Devet, and Hiram Moody will read from their own work. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. March 6 at 8. For information about tickets, call 475-5707.)

Coming Up—The first day of Spring is Monday, March 20. . . . ¶ Easter Sunday is March 26. . . . ¶ Peter Sellars' production of "Das Kleine Mahagonny" at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, March 30-April 2. . . . ¶ Yankees vs. Mets in a benefit game, Yankee Stadium, April 1. Opening day is April 3. . . . ¶ Paul Taylor Dance Company at City Center, from April 11.



GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

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FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 22.

EAST SIDE

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)

Feb. 28-March 1: At 6, "The Day of the Idiots" (1982, directed by Werner Schroeter: in German); at 8, "The Death of Maria Malibran" (1972, Werner Schroeter; in German); and, at 10, "The Charles Bukowski Tapes" (1985, Barbet Schroeder). The first twenty-six segments of the fifty-two-part French television documentary will be shown.

March 2: At 6, "Willow Springs" (1973, Werner Schroeter; in English and German); at 8, "The Rose King" (1986, Werner Schroeter; in German); and, at 10, "The Charles Bukowski Tapes."

March 3: At 6, "Willow Springs"; at 8, "The Rose King"; and, at 10, "The Charles Bukowski Tapes." The second twenty-six segments will be shown.

March 4: "The Singing Detective" (Jon Amiel), with Michael Gambon. The seven-hour British television series, shown complete at one sitting, with an intermission.

March 5: At 6, "Willow Springs"; at 8, "The Rose King"; and, at 10, "The Charles Bukowski Tapes."

March 7-8: At 6, "Dress Rehearsal" (1981, Werner Schroeter; in German and French); at 8, "The Council of Love" (1981, Werner Schroeter; in German), and, at 10, "The Charles Bukowski Tapes."

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)

Theatre 1: "Tap" (†).

Theatre 2: "Dangerous Liaisons" (†).

Theatre 3: Through March 2: "Bird" (Clint Eastwood), with Forest Whitaker. From March 3: "Lean on Me" (John G. Avildsen), with Morgan Freeman.

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)

Through March 2: "Beaches" (†).

From March 3: "New York Stories" (Woody Allen, Francis Coppola, and Martin Scorsese).

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)

"The 'Burbs" (Joe Dante), with Tom Hanks, Carrie Fisher, and Bruce Dern.

Murray Hill, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)

"Bert Rigby, You're a Fool" (Carl Reiner), with Robert Lindsay.

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)

Theatre 1: "Cousins" (†).

Theatre 2: "Mississippi Burning" (†).

Theatre 3: "Rain Man" (†).

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)

Through March 2: "Working Girl" (†).

From March 3: "Skin Deep" (Blake Edwards), with John Ritter.

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)

"Stand and Deliver" (†) and "A Cry in the Dark" (†).

Sutton, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)

Through March 2: "The Mighty Quinn" (Carl Schenkel), with Denzel Washington and Robert Townsend.

From March 3: "Lean on Me" (John G. Avildsen), with Morgan Freeman.

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)

Through March 2: "Her Alibi" (Bruce Beresford), with Tom Selleck.

From March 3: "Skin Deep" (Blake Edwards), with John Ritter.

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)

"Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure" (Stephen Herek), with Keanu Reeves.

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)

Theatre 1: "The Fly II" (Chris Walas), with Eric Stoltz.

Theatre 2: Through March 2: "The Fly II." From March 3: "Farewell to the King" (John Milius), with Nick Nolte and Nigel Havers.

D. W. Griffith, 235 E. 59th. (759-4630)

Through March 2: "Gleaming the Cube" (Graeme Clifford), with Christian Slater and Steven Bauer.

From March 3: "Dream a Little Dream" (Marc Rocco), with Corey Haim, Corey Feldman, and Jason Robards.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)

Theatre 1: "Working Girl" (†).

Theatre 2: "The 'Burbs" (Joe Dante), with Tom Hanks, Carrie Fisher, and Bruce Dern.

Emil Jannings and Marlene Dietrich in "The Blue Angel"

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)

Theatre 1: Through Feb. 28: "Beaches" (†). From March 1: "New York Stories" (Woody Allen, Francis Coppola, and Martin Scorsese).

Theatre 2: Through Feb. 28: "The Accidental Tourist" (†). From March 1: "Beaches" (†).

Theatre 3: Through Feb. 28: "Tango Bar" (†). From March 1: "The Accidental Tourist" (†).

Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)

Theatre 1: Through March 2: "Rachel River" (Sandy Smolan), with Pamela Reed, Craig T. Nelson, and James Olson. From March 3: "Out Cold" (†).

Theatre 2: "Tap" (†).

Berkman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)

"True Believer" (†).

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)

Theatre 1: "Cousins" (†).

Theatre 2: "Rain Man" (†).

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)

"Dangerous Liaisons" (†).

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)

"Mississippi Burning" (†).

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)

"The 'Burbs" (Joe Dante), with Tom Hanks, Carrie Fisher, and Bruce Dern.

Loews Orpheum I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (289-4607)

Theatre 1: "Tap" (†).

Theatre 2: Through March 2: "The Fly II" (Chris Walas), with Eric Stoltz. From March 3 (tentative): "Farewell to the King" (John Milius), with Nick Nolte and Nigel Havers.

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)

Theatre 1: Through March 2: "Beaches" (†). From March 3 (tentative): "Dream a Little Dream" (Marc Rocco), with Corey Haim, Corey Feldman, and Jason Robards.

Theatre 2: Through March 2: "The Mighty Quinn" (Carl Schenkel), with Denzel Washington and Robert Townsend. From March 3: "Lean on Me" (John G. Avildsen), with Morgan Freeman.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum I, 57 Watts St. (431-1590)

Through March 7: "Used Innocence" (1988, directed by James Benning).

From March 8: "Lightning Over Braddock: A Rustbowl Fantasy" (Tony Baba).

Bleecker St. Cinema I and 2, 144 Bleecker St. (674-2560)

Theatre 1: "Outrageous Animation," twenty-two animated films from twelve countries; and "Virgin Machine" (Monika Treut; in German), with Ina Blum.

Theatre 2: "We Think the World of You" (Colin Gregg), with Alan Bates and Gary Oldman.

Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)

Theatre 1: "The 'Burbs" (Joe Dante), with Tom Hanks, Carrie Fisher, and Bruce Dern.

Theatre 2: Through March 2: "Working Girl" (†). From March 3: "Skin Deep" (Blake Edwards), with John Ritter.

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)

Through March 2: "The Fly II" (Chris Walas), with Eric Stoltz.

From March 3: To be announced.

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)

Theatre 1: "True Believer" (†).

Theatre 2: "The Accidental Tourist" (†).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)

Theatre 1: "Salaam Bombay!" (Mira Nair; in Hindi).

Theatre 2: "Torch Song Trilogy" (Paul Bogart), with Anne Bancroft, Matthew Broderick, Harvey Fierstein, Brian Kerwin, Karen Young, Ken Page, and Charles Pierce.

Theatre 3: "36 Fillette" (Catherine Breillat; in French).

Theatre 4: "Matador" (Pedro Almodóvar; in Spanish), with Antonio Banderas, Assumpta Serna, Nacho Martínez, Eusebio Poncela, Carmen Maura, Eva Cobo, Julieta Serrano, and Chus Lampreave; and "Law of Desire" (1987, Pedro Almodóvar; in Spanish), with Carmen Maura, Eusebio Poncela, Antonio Banderas, Miguel Molina, Manuela Velasco, and Bibi Andersen.

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)

Theatre 1: Through March 2: "Working Girl" (†). From March 3: "Skin Deep" (Blake Edwards), with John Ritter.

Theatre 2: "True Believer" (†).

Theatre 3: "The 'Burbs" (Joe Dante), with Tom Hanks, Carrie Fisher, and Bruce Dern.

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)

Through March 2: "Beaches" (†).

From March 3: "New York Stories" (Woody Allen, Francis Coppola, and Martin Scorsese).

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)

"Lawrence of Arabia" (†).

Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)

"Dangerous Liaisons" (†).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)

"Bert Rigby, You're a Fool" (Carl Reiner), with Robert Lindsay.

Carnegie Hall Cinema, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)

"Paperhouse" (Bernard Rose), with Charlotte Burke, Ben Cross, and Glenne Headly.

Carnegie Screening Room, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (757-2131)

"The Luckiest Man in the World" (Frank D. Gilroy), with Philip Bosco.

Paris, 4 W. 58th. (688-2013)

"The Dressmaker" (†).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)

"Gorillas in the Mist" (†).

Loews Paramount, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)

"Rain Man" (†).

Lincoln Plaza 1, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "Pelle the Conqueror" (†).
Theatre 2: "High Hopes" (†).
Theatre 3: Through March 2: "High Hopes" (†). From March 3: "Under the Sun of Satan" (Maurice Pialat; in French), with Gérard Depardieu and Sandrine Bonnaire.

Cinema Studio 1 and 2, B'way at 66th. (877-4040)
Theatre 1: "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" (†).
Theatre 2: "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" (†).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"Working Girl" (†).

Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: Through March 2: "Tap" (†). From March 3 (tentative): "New York Stories" (Woody Allen, Francis Coppola, and Martin Scorsese).
Theatre 2: Through March 2: "Three Fugitives" (†). From March 3 (tentative): "Farewell to the King" (John Milius), with Nick Nolte and Nigel Havers.
Theatre 3: "Mississippi Burning" (†).
Theatre 4: "Cousins" (†).
Theatre 5: "The Accidental Tourist" (†).
Theatre 6: "Dangerous Liaisons" (†).

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "The Last Temptation of Christ" (Martin Scorsese), with Willem Dafoe, Harvey Keitel, Barbara Hershey, and David Bowie.
Theatre 2: "The 'Burbs" (Joe Dante), with Tom Hanks, Carrie Fisher, and Bruce Dern.

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: "True Believer" (†).
Theatre 2: Through March 2: "The Fly II" (Chris Walas), with Eric Stoltz. From March 3: "Skin Deep" (Blake Edwards), with John Ritter.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "Dangerous Liaisons" (†).
Theatre 2: Through March 2: "Kinjite" (directed by J. Lee Thompson), with Charles Bronson. From March 3: "Out Cold" (†).
Theatre 3: Through March 2: "Gleaming the Cube" (Graeme Clifford), with Christian Slater and Steven Bauer. From March 3: "Skin Deep" (Blake Edwards), with John Ritter.
Theatre 4: "Working Girl" (†).
Theatre 5: "Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure" (Stephen Herek), with Keanu Reeves.
Theatre 6: "Tap" (†).

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
Through March 2: "Three Fugitives" (†).
From March 3: "Heart of Midnight" (Matthew Chapman), with Jennifer Jason Leigh, Peter Coyote, Brenda Vaccaro, and Frank Stallone.

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 2: Through March 2: "Cousins" (†). From March 3: "Beaches" (†).
Theatre 3: Through March 2: "The Accused" (Jonathan Kaplan), with Kelly McGillis and Jodie Foster. From March 3: "Three Fugitives" (†).
Theatre 4: Through March 2: "Beaches" (†). From March 3: "The Mighty Quinn" (Carl Schenkel), with Denzel Washington and Robert Townsend.

Loews Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
Through March 2: "The Mighty Quinn" (Carl Schenkel), with Denzel Washington and Robert Townsend.
From March 3: "Farewell to the King" (John Milius), with Nick Nolte and Nigel Havers.

Movieland, B'way at 47th. (757-8320)
"True Believer" (†).

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: "The Fly II" (Chris Walas), with Eric Stoltz.
Theatre 2: "The 'Burbs" (Joe Dante), with Tom Hanks, Carrie Fisher, and Bruce Dern.

Warner, 7th Ave. between 42nd and 43rd. (764-6760)
"Mississippi Burning" (†).

West Side Cinema 1 and 2, 7th Ave. at 48th. (398-1720)
Theatre 1: Through March 2: "Twins" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito. From March 3: "Lean on Me" (John G. Avildsen), with Morgan Freeman.
Theatre 2: Through March 2: "I'm Gonna Git You Sucka" (Keenen Ivory Wayans), with Wayans, Bernie Casey, and Antonio Fargas. From March 3: "Lean on Me."

REVIVAL HOUSES

Biograph Cinema, 225 W. 57th. (582-4582)
Through Feb. 28: "Dark Victory" (1939, directed by Edmund Goulding), with Bette Davis, George Brent, Humphrey Bogart, Ronald Reagan, and Geraldine Fitzgerald; and "Goodbye, Mr. Chips" (1939, Sam Wood), with Robert Donat, Greer Garson, and Terry Kilburn.
March 1-2: "Stagecoach" (1939 †); and "Jesse James" (1939, Henry King), with Tyrone Power, Nancy Kelly, Henry Fonda, Jane Darwell, and Randolph Scott.
March 3-4: "It's a Wonderful World" (1939, W. S. Van Dyke), with Claudette Colbert and James Stewart; and "The Women" (1939, George Cukor), with Norma Shearer, Rosalind Russell, Joan Crawford, and Paulette Goddard.
March 5-6: "Beau Geste" (1939, William Wellman), with Gary Cooper and Brian Donlevy; and "Destry Rides Again" (1939, George Marshall), with Marlene Dietrich, James Stewart, and Una Merkel.
March 7-8: "The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle" (1939, H. C. Potter), with Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Edna May Oliver, and Walter Brennan; and "Ice Follies of 1939" (Reinhold Schunzel), with Joan Crawford, James Stewart, and Lew Ayres.

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)
Through Feb. 28: "Big" (1988, Penny Marshall), with Tom Hanks, Elizabeth Perkins, and Robert Loggia; and "Punchline" (1988, David Seltzer), with Sally Field and Tom Hanks.
March 1-2: "Paths of Glory" (1957, Stanley Kubrick), with Kirk Douglas; and "The Killing" (1956, Stanley Kubrick), with Sterling Hayden, Coleen Gray, and Vince Edwards.
March 3-4: "Diva" (1981, Jean-Jacques Beineix; in French), with Wilhelmenia Fernandez and Frédéric Andrei; and "The Big Blue" (1988, Luc Besson), with Rosanna Arquette and Jean-Marc Barr.
March 5: "Greed" (1924, Erich von Stroheim; silent), with Gibson Gowland, ZaSu Pitts, and Jean Hersholt; and "The Crowd" (1928, King Vidor; silent), with Eleanor Boardman and James Murray.
March 6-7: "Track 29" (1988, Nicolas Roeg), with Theresa Russell and Gary Oldman; and "Don't Look Now" (1973, Nicolas Roeg), with Julie Christie and Donald Sutherland.
From March 8: "Down by Law" (1986, Jim Jarmusch), with Tom Waits, John Lurie, and Roberto Benigni; and "Big Time" (1988, Chris Blum), with Tom Waits.

Film Forum 2, 57 Watts St. (431-1590)
Through Feb. 28: "The Stationmaster's Wife" (1977, Rainer Werner Fassbinder in German), with Kurt Raab; and "The American Soldier" (1970, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German), with Karl Scheydt and Margarethe von Trotta.
March 1-2: "Chinese Roulette" (1977, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German), with Margit Carstensen; and "Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?" (1970, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German), with Kurt Raab, Lilith Ungerer, and Hanna Schygulla.
March 3-5: "The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant" (1972, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German).
March 6-8: "Ali: Fear Eats the Soul" (1974) and "Mother Küsters Goes to Heaven" (1975), both in German, directed by Rainer Werner Fassbinder, with Brigitte Mira.

Thalia SoHo, 15 Vandam St. (675-0498)
Feb. 27: "Coney Island" (1943, Walter Lang), with Betty Grable, George Montgomery, Cesar Romero, Charles Winninger, and Phil Silvers; and "Doll Face" (1946, Lewis Seiler), with Vivian Blaine, Dennis O'Keefe, Perry Como, and Carmen Miranda.
Feb. 28: "Ladybug Ladybug" (1963, Frank Perry), with Christopher Howard; and "Five" (1951, Arch Oboler), with William Phipps.
March 1: "Secret Agent" (1936, Alfred Hitchcock), with John Gielgud, Peter Lorre, Madeleine Carroll, and Robert Young; and "The Man Who Knew Too Much" (1934, Alfred Hitchcock), with Leslie Banks, Edna Best, Pierre Fresnay, and Peter Lorre.
March 2: "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" (1945, Elia Kazan), with Dorothy McGuire,

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MOVIE HOUSES—Cont'd

James Dunn, and Peggy Ann Garner; and "Junior Miss" (1945, George Seaton), with Peggy Ann Garner.

March 3-4: "1900" (1977, Bernardo Bertolucci), with Robert De Niro, Burt Lancaster, Donald Sutherland, Dominique Sanda, Sterling Hayden, and Gérard Depardieu.

March 5: "Persona" (1967, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish), with Bibi Andersson and Liv Ullmann; and "After the Rehearsal" (1984, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish), with Erland Josephson and Ingrid Thulin.

March 6: "A Raisin in the Sun" (1961, Daniel Petrie), with Sidney Poitier, Claudia McNeil, and Ruby Dee; and "The Member of the Wedding" (1952, Fred Zinnemann), with Ethel Waters and Julie Harris.

March 7: "Born Yesterday" (1950, George Cukor), with Judy Holliday, William Holden, and Broderick Crawford; and "The Marrying Kind" (1952, George Cukor), with Judy Holliday and Aldo Ray.

March 8: "The Adversary" (1971, Satyajit Ray; in Bengali), with Dhritiman Chatterjee; and "Kanchenjungha" (1962, Satyajit Ray; in Bengali).

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)

Feb. 27: "L'Avventura" (1959, Michelangelo Antonioni; in Italian), with Monica Vitti, Gabriele Ferzetti, and Léa Massari; and "L'Amore" (1948, Roberto Rossellini; in Italian), with Anna Magnani.

Feb. 28: "This Gun for Hire" (1942, Frank Tuttle), with Veronica Lake, Alan Ladd, and Laird Cregar; and "The Glass Key" (1942, Stuart Heisler), with Brian Donlevy, Veronica Lake, and Alan Ladd.

March 1: "The Threepenny Opera" (1931, G. W. Pabst; in German), with Lotte Lenya; and "The Blue Angel" (1929 †).

March 2: "The Sin of Harold Diddlebock" (1947, Preston Sturges), with Harold Lloyd; and "Sullivan's Travels" (†).

March 3-4: "Suddenly, Last Summer" (1959, Joseph L. Mankiewicz), with Elizabeth Taylor, Montgomery Clift, and Katharine Hepburn; and "Holiday" (1938, George Cukor), with Katharine Hepburn, Cary Grant, Lew Ayres, Edward Everett Horton, and Doris Nolan.

March 5: "Blow-Up" (†); and "Red Desert" (1964, Michelangelo Antonioni; in Italian), with Monica Vitti and Richard Harris.

March 6: "Ashes and Diamonds" (1958, Andrzej Wajda; in Polish), with Zbigniew Cybulski; and "A Generation" (1954, Andrzej Wajda; in Polish).

March 7: "Back Street" (1932, John M. Stahl), with Irene Dunne and John Boles; and "Magnificent Obsession" (1935, John M. Stahl), with Irene Dunne and Robert Taylor.

March 8: "The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe" (1954, Luis Buñuel), with Dan O'Herlihy and James Fernandez; and "El" (†).

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490) **theatre i:** Feb. 27 at 3: "The Passion of Joan of Arc" (1927-28, directed by Carl Theodor Dreyer; silent). . . . ¶ Feb. 27 at 6: "Ordet" (1954-55, Dreyer; in Danish). . . . ¶ Feb. 28 at 3: "The Parson's Widow" (1920, Dreyer; live English voice-over). . . . ¶ Feb. 28 at 6: "The President" (1918-19, Dreyer; live English voice-over). . . . ¶ March 2 at 3: Five short documentaries made by Dreyer, 1942-50, for the Danish government. . . . ¶ March 2 at 6: "Gertrud" (1964, Dreyer; in Danish). . . . ¶ March 3 at 2: "Love One Another" (1921-22, Dreyer; live English voice-over). . . . ¶ March 3 at 6: "Two People" (1944-45, Dreyer; in Swedish). . . . ¶ March 4 at 2: "Day of Wrath" (1943, Dreyer; in Danish). . . . ¶ March 4 at 5: "Once Upon a Time" (1922, Dreyer; live English voice-over) and "Bride of Glomdale" (1925-26, Dreyer; live English voice-over), both incomplete prints. . . . ¶ March 5 at 2: "The Master of the House" (1925, Dreyer; silent). . . . ¶ March 5 at 5: "Leaves from Satan's Book" (1919-21, Dreyer; live English voice-over). . . . ¶ March 6-7 at 2:30 and 6: Films nominated for the 1988 Academy Award for Best Foreign-Language Film. **theatre 2:** Feb. 27 at 6:30: "Displaced Person" (1981) and "Cooperation of Parts" (1987), both by Daniel Eisenberg, who will be present. . . . ¶ Feb. 28 at 3 and 6: "Vinyl" (1965, Andy Warhol), with Ondine, Edie Sedgwick, and Larry Latreille; and "Beauty #2" (1965, Warhol), with Gino Piserchio and Edie Sedgwick. . . . ¶ March 2 at 6; March 3 at 3 and 6; March 4 at 12, 3, and 6; and March 5 at 12, 3, and 5:30: Films nominated for the 1988 Academy Award for Best Feature Documentary. . . . ¶ March 6 at 6:30: Super-8 and 16-mm. films by Nick Zedd, who will be present.

American Museum of the Moving Image, 36th St. at 35th Ave., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—At the **riklis theatre:** Independent and experimental films about New York City. March 1-2 at 2:30: "Still" (1971, Ernie Gehr). . . . March 3 at 2:30: "Misery Index" (1982, Nina Fonoroff). . . . ¶ The first of twelve Sidney Poitier films. March 3 at 7:30: "Edge of the City" (1957, Martin Ritt). . . . March 4 at 1: "No Way Out" (1950, Joseph L. Mankiewicz). . . . March 4 at 4: "Pressure Point" (1962, Stanley Kramer). . . . March 4 at 7:30: "A Raisin in the Sun" (1961, Daniel Petrie). . . . March 5 at 1: "To Sir, with Love" (1967, James Clavell). . . . March 5 at 4: "The Blackboard Jungle" (1955, Richard Brooks). . . . March 8 at 2:30: "Edge of the City."

Collective for Living Cinema, 41 White St. (925-2111)—Feb. 27 at 8: "Le Gai Savoir" (1969, Jean-Luc Godard; in French). . . . ¶ Feb. 28 at 8: "Born to be Bad" (1950, Nicholas Ray), with Joan Fontaine, Mel Ferrer, and Zachary Scott. . . . ¶ March 1 at 8: "The Left-Handed Woman" (1978, Peter Handke; in German). . . . ¶ March 2 at 8: Experimental films from the Image Forum Film Group in Tokyo. . . . ¶ March 3 at 8: "Alice Dropped the Mirror and It Broke" (1989), directed by Penelope Wehrli, who will be present. . . . ¶ March 3 at 10:30: Four short animated films by the Brothers Quay. . . . ¶ March 4 at 8: "Diary of a Lost Girl" (1929, G. W. Pabst; silent with a musical score). . . . ¶ March 4 at 10:30: Four short animated films by the Brothers Quay. . . . ¶ March 5 at 8: Award-winning films from the 1989 Black Maria Film Festival. . . . ¶ March 6 at 8: "Band of Outsiders" (1964, Godard; in French), with Anna Karina, Claude Brasseur, and Sami Frey. . . . ¶ March 7 at 8: Award-winning videos from the 22nd Annual Brooklyn Arts Council Film and Video Festival. . . . ¶ March 8 at 8: "Memories of Underdevelopment" (1973, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea; a Cuban film, in Spanish).

Whitney Museum, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-0537)—The film section of "Yoko Ono: Objects, Films" is showing in the Film/Video Gallery on the second floor. Feb. 28-March 5: "Erection" (1971), "Apotheosis" (1970), and "Fly" (1970). . . . ¶ From March 7: "Rape" (1969). Tuesdays at 1:30, 3:30, and 6:15; Wednesdays through Saturdays at 11:30, 1:30, and 3:30; and Sundays at 12:30, 2:30, and 4:30.

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. (517-2742)—Two films on Asia by German filmmakers. March 3 at 3: "The Chinese Are Coming" (1986, Manfred Stelzer). . . . ¶ March 3 at 7: "Ten Days in Calcutta" (1984, Reinhard Hauff), a documentary about Indian filmmaker Mrinal Sen.

IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Arlene Croce.)

The Accidental Tourist—It begins with the numb grief of a punctilious Baltimore travel writer, Macon Leary (William Hurt), whose twelve-year-old son was senselessly shot. Macon has become such a depressed loner that his wife (Kathleen Turner) leaves him. The movie, directed by Lawrence Kasdan, who wrote the screenplay with Frank Galati, closely follows the 1985 Anne Tyler novel, and it's about Macon's coming to life. A fiercely eager oddball (Geena Davis) who pulls him into her bed turns out to be his salvation. The plot construction is that of a screwball comedy of the thirties: poor working girl has the life force that upper-class prig needs. But people talk a formal, affected English that sounds counterfeit and everyone seems catatonic. With Amy Wright, Ed Begley, Jr., and David Ogden Stiers.—P.K. (Reviewed in our issue of 1/23/89.) (Art Greenwich Twin, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ Cinema II; through Feb. 28. . . . ¶ Cinema 3rd Avenue; starting March 1.)

Beaches—This movie about the lifelong friendship between two women of contrasting backgrounds—Bette Midler as CC Bloom, a show-biz-crazy Jewish redhead from New York, and Barbara Hershey as Hillary Whitney, a repressed wealthy Wasp from San Francisco—suggests the kind of material that Midler might be using for a takeoff. Instead, it's being played for maudlin soulfulness. After a while, it turns into an all-girl "Love Story," with Hillary becoming ghoulishly pale from heart disease and CC (now a singing star) staying at her side. If you admired Midler in "The Rose" and "Down and Out in Beverly Hills," you may want to bash your head against the wall. With Mayim Bialik, who must have been specially created to be CC at eleven, and John Heard. The director, Garry Marshall, shows no feeling for the material—not even false feeling; the script, by Mary Agnes Donoghue, is from Iris Rainer Dart's novel.—P.K. (1/23/89) (Embassy. . . . ¶ Cinema I; through Feb. 28. . . . ¶ Gramercy, 86th Street East Twin, and Guild; through March 2. . . . ¶ Cinema II; starting March 1.)

Blow-Up (1966)—When the film came out, Michelangelo Antonioni's mixture of suspense with vagueness and confusion seemed to have a numbing fascination for some people which they associated with art and intellectuality. He conducts a leisurely tour of "swinging" London, while ponderously suggesting that the mod scene represents a condition of spiritual malaise in which people live only for the sensations of the moment. The best part of the movie is an ingeniously edited sequence in which the fashion-photographer hero (David Hemmings) blows up a series of photographs and discovers that he has inadvertently photographed a murder. With Vanessa Redgrave, Sarah Miles, Verushka, Jane Birkin, and Peter Bowles. Freely adapted by Antonioni and Tonino Guerra from a short story by Julio Cortázar, with English dialogue by Edward Bond. Cinematography by Carlo Di Palma.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; March 5.)

The Blue Angel (1929)—The director Josef von Sternberg had been working in Hollywood for more than fifteen years when he went to Germany, at Emil Jannings' request, to direct this adaptation of Heinrich Mann's novel "Professor Unrath." Jannings plays the inhibited, tyrannical high-school instructor who is prudishly indignant about his students' visiting Lola Lola (Marlene Dietrich), the singer at the Blue Angel; he goes to the café to put a stop to it and instead succumbs to her callous, impassive sexuality. Dietrich is extraordinary and you can admire the movie sequence by sequence, but the teacher's sexual humiliation is laid on very thick. With Hans Albers. In German.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; March 1.)

Cousins—With Ted Danson and Isabella Rossellini, directed by Joel Schumacher. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews New York Twin, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ Embassy; through March 2.)

A Cry in the Dark—The director, Fred Schepisi, attempts an epic dissection of how superstitions can spread, and how false the public perception (based on the media) can be. He uses the case of Lindy Chamberlain (Meryl Streep), the wife of a Seventh Day Adventist minister, who was tried for murder and convicted, to ask why Australians cynically rejected her account of seeing a dingo (the

Australian wild dog) slink off from the tent her nine-week-old daughter was in. Perhaps the thing that made her the most hated woman in Australia was that TV had accustomed people to grieving mothers who showed their frailty and their naked pathos, and here was Lindy on TV—stoic, matter-of-fact, and bluntly impatient at the endless dumb questions. (From time to time, Streep suggests the strong emotions that Lindy hides in public, and we feel a bond with her—we feel joined to her privacy.) The movie is never less than gripping, but Schepisi, who worked on the script with Robert Caswell (it's based on John Bryson's study of the case, "Evil Angels"), put together more elements than he could develop. Remarkable as Streep is (she does some of her finest screen acting), she seems to be playing a person in a documentary. This is also true of the accomplished Sam Neill, though he seems faultlessly right as Lindy's husband. You come out moved—even shaken—yet not quite certain what you've been watching.—P.K. (11/28/88) (Eastside Cinema.)

DANGEROUS LIAISONS—One of the least static costume films ever made, and what costumes! The women—Glenn Close, Michelle Pfeiffer, Uma Thurman, Swoosie Kurtz, Mildred Natwick—look as if they'd been dressed by Gainsborough. (Actually, it was James Acheson, who also dressed "The Last Emperor.") Principally about the erotic power games played by the Marquise de Merteuil (Glenn Close) and the Vicomte de Valmont (John Malkovich), who were once lovers but are now allies and co-conspirators, this first-rate piece of work by the daring and agile director Stephen Frears is alive in a way that movies of classics rarely are. The paradisially beautiful Pfeiffer is wonderfully affecting as the pawn of the debauchers' final game. The screenwriter, Christopher Hampton, reworked his 1985 theatrical version of the 1782 novel by Choderlos de Laclos; cinematography by Philippe Rousselot.—P.K. (1/9/89) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 68th St. Playhouse, Festival, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

THE DRESSMAKER—The whole cast rises to the occasion—a chance to appear in John McGrath's fine adaptation of the 1973 Beryl Bainbridge novel (published here in 1974 as "The Secret Glass"). Joan Plowright as Nellie, the prudish unmarried dressmaker, and Billie Whitelaw as Margo, the widow with a roving eye who works in a munitions factory, are sisters. The setting is Liverpool in 1944, and the plot centers on what happens when sallow, skinny Rita (Jane Horrocks), the seventeen-year-old niece they have raised, falls in love with Wesley (Tim Ransom), a Yank from Mississippi. This good, inexpensive British movie is about morbid respectability, and the director, Jim O'Brien, makes it possible for the actors to create a maze of claustrophobic subtexts. It's doubtful if either Plowright or Whitelaw has ever before been this scarily effective onscreen; Whitelaw's sky-blue eyes stab you—she seems to have become the nakedest of performers. With Peter Postlethwaite, Pippa Hinchley, and Rosemary Martin.—P.K. (12/12/88) (Paris.)

EL ("This Strange Passion"; 1952)—Working in Mexico, Luis Buñuel made this mocking study of irrational love and jealousy—a film with suggestions of Freud and the Marquis de Sade. Francisco (Arturo de Córdova), a wealthy Catholic, marries Gloria (Delia Garcés), and the symptoms begin on their honeymoon: imagining that her former fiancé is in the next room spying on them, he thrusts a knitting needle through the keyhole. As the symptoms mount in an absurd but frightening crescendo, Buñuel makes his own thrusts at the Church, and by carrying the Spanish male's obsession with female chastity to paranoia, he exposes the insanity that's inherent in it. Except for the well-edited anticlerical sequences, however, one must be prepared to enjoy Buñuel's daring (which usually takes the form of bizarre jokes) despite the careless, cheaply made look of the film. In Spanish.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; March 8.)

GORILLAS IN THE MIST—Sigourney Weaver as the anthropologist Dian Fossey, in what seems meant to be a triumphant epic about an activist heroine who made a difference. (A title at the close tells us that Fossey saved the mountain gorillas from extinction.) Weaver's physical strength alone is inspiring here, and there's a new freedom in her acting. She's so vivid that you immediately feel Fossey's will and drive. But Michael Apted, who directed, has an indeterminate approach to some of the key incidents; he doesn't locate a dramatic core in Anna Hamilton Phelan's script. The movie is a feminist version of "King Kong"—now it's the gorillas who do the screaming.—P.K. (10/17/88) (Cinema 3.)

HIGH HOPES—Mike Leigh's wacked-out comedy-drama about life in Thatcherland features three couples: the rich twits (David Bamber and Lesley Manville as a young champagne dealer and his cool socialite wife); the pushy yups (Philip Jackson and Heather Tobias as a boorish car salesman and his shrill, social-climber wife); the working poor (bearded Philip Davis and dark-eyed Ruth Sheen as a pot-smoking Marxist who scrapes by as a motorcycle messenger and his companion of ten years, who likes to grow things). This may sound like a liberal-left horror, but the English delight in extreme, preposterous silliness hasn't died even among the serious left: the characters keep turning into absurdist cartoons. As the twitty nymph Laetitia, Lesley Manville is a cutup, like Andrea Martin or Catherine O'Hara. It's an exuberantly likable movie—not always satisfying but never drab, never ordinary. With Edna Doré as the messenger's forgetful old mum; the cinematography is by Roger Pratt.—P.K. (2/20/89) (Lincoln Plaza.)

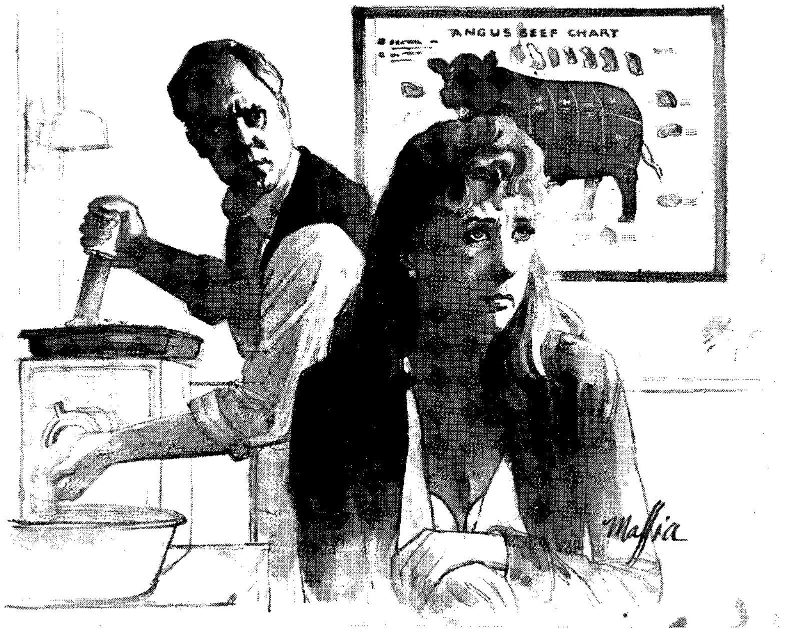
LAWRENCE OF ARABIA (1962)—If you went to see it under the delusion that it was going to be about T. E. Lawrence, you probably stayed to enjoy the vastness of the desert and the pleasures of the senses that a huge movie epic can provide. Directed by David Lean, from a script by Robert Bolt, loosely based on Lawrence's "Seven Pillars of Wisdom," this picture fails to give an acceptable interpretation of Lawrence, or to keep its action intelligible, but it is one of the most literate and tasteful and exciting of expensive spectacles. The central figure is played quite stunningly by Peter O'Toole, though he seems to be doing "Lord Jim"—which he was cast in a couple of years later (and then it looked as if he were doing Lawrence all over again). Bolt and Lean turn the hero into such a flamboyant poetic enigma that he is displaced in the film by a simpler hero—Omar Sharif's Ali, a handsome sheikh with liquid brown eyes and conventionally sympathetic lines to speak. As it became apparent that most people in the audience hadn't the remotest idea of what the Arabs and the Turks were doing in the First World War, or which was which, or why the English cared, the question raised by the movie was, Can complicated historical events and a complex hero really get across in a spectacle? With Alec Guinness, José Ferrer, Anthony Quinn, Arthur Kennedy, Jack Hawkins, Claude Rains, Anthony Quayle, and Donald Wolfit. Cinematography by Freddie Young; music by Maurice Jarre. (The film, substantially cut after its first release, has been restored to a more or less definitive version, running 217 minutes.)—P.K. (Ziegfeld.)

MISSISSIPPI BURNING—Set in Mississippi in the summer of 1964, it opens with a fictionalized re-creation of the murder of the three civil-rights workers—James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner—but it isn't really about the civil-rights movement. The director, Alan Parker, treats Southerners the way he treated the Turks ten years ago in "Midnight Express." And he twists facts here as he did there, with the same apparent objective: to come up with garish forms of violence. Two F.B.I. men (Gene Hackman and Willem Dafoe) arrive to find out what happened to the three activists, and a huge manhunt is initiated. The movie hinges on the ploy that the F.B.I. men can't stop the K.K.K. from its terrorism against blacks until they swing over to vigilante tactics. And we're put in the position of applauding the F.B.I.'s dirtiest forms of intimidation. Hackman is superb, and there's impressive work by Frances McDormand, Brad Dourif, Park Overall, and others. But the film is morally repugnant. The script is credited to Chris Gerolmo (Parker says he rewrote it).—P.K. (12/26/88) (Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews Tower East, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Warner.)

OUT COLD—With John Lithgow, Teri Garr, and Randy Quaid; directed by Malcolm Mowbray. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Gemini, and Criterion Center; starting March 3.)

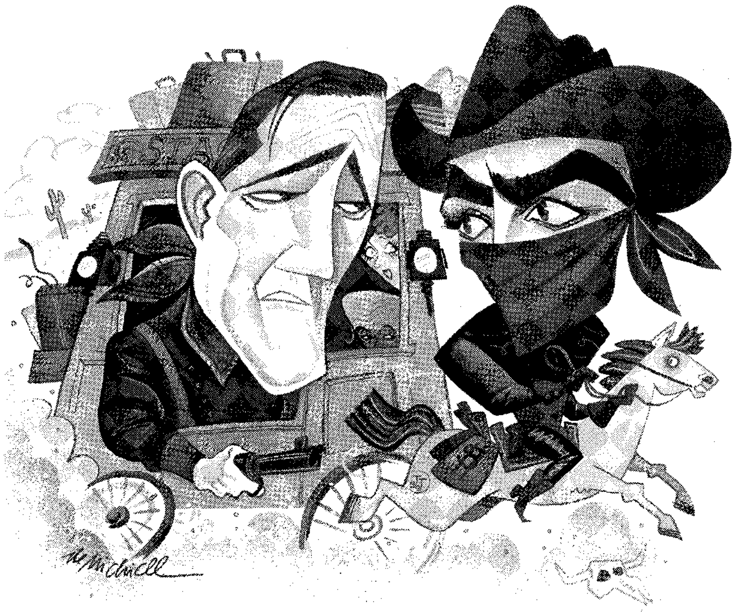
PELLE THE CONQUEROR—An aging, weak-willed Swedish widower (Max von Sydow) and his young son (Pelle Hvenegaard) emigrate to Denmark and find work on a large estate, where they're exploited and abused. The boy, more spirited than his father, ultimately escapes. The movie, written and directed by Bille August from a novel by Martin Andersen Nexo, isn't as dreary as it sounds. August directs with great skill and feeling, and the cinematography, by Jorgen Persson ("Elvira Madigan"), is sensational. The images are never simply beautiful—they always carry a strong emotional and dramatic charge. Yet there's a basic dullness in Nexo's material which August can't transcend. For most of the picture's two and a half hours, we're moved and bored simultaneously. In Danish and Swedish.—T.R. (Lincoln Plaza.)

RAIN MAN—Dustin Hoffman is Raymond, an autistic savant who lives in an institution in Cincinnati, and Tom Cruise is his huckster brother Charlie, an L.A. car dealer, who kidnaps him, hoping to get hold of some of the three million dollars that their father has left in trust for Raymond's care. Hoffman upstages the movie; Cruise's performance consists of not smiling too much—so as not to distract his fans from watching Hoffman. The director, Barry Levinson, stretches out the scenes until they yawn. But the picture has its effectiveness: people are crying at it. Of course they're crying at it—it's a piece of wet kitsch. With Valeria Golino; Ronald Bass was the principal screenwriter.—P.K. (2/6/89) (Loews 34th Street Show-



John Lithgow and Teri Garr in "Out Cold" place, Loews New York Twin, and Loews Paramount.)

STAGECOACH (1939)—Perhaps the most likable of all Westerns, and a "Grand Hotel"-on-wheels movie that has just about everything—adventure, romance, chivalry—and all of it very simple and traditional. John Ford directed, from a script by Dudley Nichols (with, it's said, uncredited work by Ben Hecht), based on a story by Ernest Haycox—"Stage to Lordsburg." The cast includes John Wayne, at his most appealing as the Ringo Kid, and Claire Trevor, John Carradine, Louise Platt, George Bancroft, Thomas Mitchell, Andy Devine, and Donald Meek. Cinematography by Bert Glennon.—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; March 1-2.)



"Jesse James" meets "Stagecoach" at the Biograph

STAND AND DELIVER—Strictly speaking, this educational-inspiration story about a wizardly math teacher in a poor East L.A. high school isn't much of a movie: it's clumsily directed (by Ramon Menendez) and predictably virtuous (it's an American Playhouse production). Yet it's fairly enjoyable—painless, at least. The screenplay, by Menendez and Tom Musca, is based on the true story of Jaime Escalante (Edward James Olmos), who arrived at dispirited Garfield High, which was on the brink of losing its accreditation, and managed to get his students excited about learning his subject—an entire class of these disadvantaged kids eventually took and passed the advanced-placement exam in calculus. Olmos, who's best known as the super-cool Lt. Castillo on "Miami Vice," does a spectacular turn. With thinning hair and a wardrobe of those grotesque shirts that scream "math teacher" to the world, he plays Escalante as a benign psycho, an impassioned nerd whose humor and energy are plausibly inspiring. Also with Lou Diamond Phillips, Rosana de Soto, and Andy Garcia.—T.R. (Eastside Cinema.)

SULLIVAN'S TRAVELS (1941)—Preston Sturges's comedy about a popular—slightly fatuous—Hollywood director (Joel McCrea), who feels that his hits, such as "Ants in Your Plants of 1939," aren't worthy of a war-devastated world. To research his next project, he gets dressed as a tramp and goes out to investigate the lower depths. Sturges is more at home in slapstick irony than in the mixed tones of this comedy-melodrama, but it's a memorable film nevertheless. With Veronica Lake, underacting with perfect composure, and Margaret Hayes, and many of the actors Sturges delighted in and used repeatedly—William Demarest, Franklin Pangborn, Robert Warwick, Porter Hall, Eric Blore, Esther Howard, and others.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; March 2.)

TANGO BAR—A disguised anthology film, in which the managers of a fictitious Buenos Aires cabaret, rivals in love, give nightly seminars in the tango, its history and mystique. The dance episodes, a dismaying miscellany of styles and treatments, include vintage and non-vintage Hollywood clips; Valentino's tango gets mixed up with its rendition in the 1951 movie biography "Valentino," and nobody notices the difference. A Puerto Rican production, directed by Marcos Zurinaga, with Raul Julia as head interlocutor.—A.C. (Cinema 3rd Avenue; through Feb. 28.)

TAP—A thirties-style semi-musical with a good strong Cagneyish role for Gregory Hines. He plays an ex-con whose true vocation is to carry on the great black tap-dance tradition founded on jazz. That's Hines' vocation in real life, too, only his way of realizing it on the screen—he hooks up with a rock band and a synthesizer, and his taps go boom—is a lot less controversial than it would be in real life. Written and directed by Nick Castle, Jr., the film is the first to tell us about the black tap community in feature-length fiction terms, and those terms finally defeat it. The numbers are staged in old-movie-musical formats, white folks are everywhere, Harlem doesn't exist. But Hines is liberated, and is exciting for the first time on the screen. With Sammy Davis, Jr.; the young dancer Savion Glover; and, playing themselves, Sandman Sims, Bunny Briggs, Jimmy Slyde, Harold Nicholas, Arthur Duncan, Steve Condos, and Pat Rico.—A.C. (2/6/89; under Dancing.) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Gemini, Loews Orpheum, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Loews 84th Street Sixplex; through March 2.)

THREE FUGITIVES—A crumbum farce by the French writer-director Francis Veber, working in this country. (It's a remake of his "Les Fugitifs.") Nick Nolte plays a veteran armed robber who goes to a bank to open an account and is taken hostage by Martin Short, a terrified twerp of an amateur holdup man. He needs money to keep his six-year-old daughter (Sarah Rowland Doroff) in a special school—she has been mute since her mother died, two years earlier. That's the setup: the three are variously chased, and chase each other. Nolte keeps whamming Short on the head, and the tot ignores her devoted father. He's too small for her. She's smitten by big, blond, blue-eyed Nolte; queasy pedophiliac overtones hover in the air. This salute to macho has cinematography by Haskell Wexler; he lighted something that shouldn't have seen the light of day. With Kenneth McMillan, James Earl Jones, and Bruce McGill.—P.K. (2/20/89) (Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy 1; through March 2. . . . ¶ Embassy; starting March 3.)

It's easy to forget that before he was a symbol of his race Sidney Poitier was one of the most exciting young actors in American movies. In fifties social-problem dramas like "The Blackboard Jungle" and "Edge of the City" he was electrifying. The charge weakened in the sixties, when the writers and directors (they know who they are) of such films as "To Sir, with Love" and "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" so sentimentalized his most striking qualities—the beautiful rich voice, the astonishing physical grace—that they became almost boring. But not quite: even in the pious stinkers Poitier draws the audience to him. The American Museum of the Moving Image is showing twelve of his films, starting this week. Concentrate on the early work, and try, if it's not too painful, to imagine what this actor might have done with a genuinely great role.

The Polish director Andrzej Wajda also reached an early peak in the fifties, with three powerful movies about his country's wartime traumas. Theatre 80 St. Marks is screening his first film, "A Generation," and his third, "Ashes and Diamonds." ("Kanal" was the middle one.) Both are about the confusions and moral choices of young people, and Wajda's work has a vitality, an expressive urgency, that it has achieved only sporadically since.

TRUE BELIEVER—A nifty thriller—fast and tense—about a Manhattan lawyer (James Woods) who was a hero of the counterculture but is now defending drug dealers and getting paid in cash. When he's goaded by his new law associate (Robert Downey, Jr.) into taking on a murder case, his eyes widen at the bare possibility that the man he's defending might be innocent. The movie makes us share the lawyer's energy and charge as he investigates the crime. He doesn't want to sleep: he lives off the excitement of having a cause. It's a pick-me-up of a movie. Nothing great, nothing terribly distinctive, but the aliveness of the texture can quicken your senses and keep you fascinated. Directed by Joseph Ruben ("Dreamspace," "The Stepfather"), from a script by Wesley Strick. With Yuji Okumoto, Margaret Colin, Kurtwood Smith, Tom Bower, and Miguel Fernandes. (The interiors were shot in San Francisco and Oakland.)—P.K. (2/20/89) (Beekman, Art Greenwich Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, Olympia, and Movieland.)

WOMEN ON THE VERGE OF A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN—The most original pop writer-director of the eighties, Pedro Almodóvar is Godard with a human face—a happy face. The artificial is what sends him sky high, and the Madrid of this film is (as the closing song has it) "Puro Teatro." This is a movie where after a while you can't tell sexy from funny. Pepa (Carmen Maura), an actress who works in TV and commercials, turns on her answering machine and learns that she has been jilted. Infuriated, she dashes around, on spike heels, in a short, tight skirt, trying to confront her long-time live-in lover, the elegant, vain Iván (Fernando Guillén). The women of the title include Iván's early lover (Julieta Serrano), his new lover (Kiti Manver), and two (Rossy De Palma and María Barranco) who are involved with his son (Antonio Banderas). Sleek-legged and chic, they run the theatrical gamut. Cinematography by José Luis Alcaine. In Spanish.—P.K. (11/14/88) (Cinema Studio.)

WORKING GIRL—Mike Nichols made this yuppie Cinderella romance, with Melanie Griffith as Tess McGill, a poor but enterprising girl from Staten Island who fights off the sleazoid bosses and struggles to break through the educational-background barriers and climb from Wall Street secretary to executive. We're supposed to be cheered by watching Tess become part of the establishment. Griffith is very appealing, and she carries what there is of the picture, but this is the kind of star performance in which the heroine's misty eyes and soft-focus smiles (which suggest bleariness) are supposed to turn our brains to jelly. After a bouncy, promising opening, the staging becomes so broad you can't tell whether satire is intended or just dumb jokes. With Sigourney Weaver, Harrison Ford, Joan Cusack, and Alec Baldwin. The script is credited to Kevin Wade.—P.K. (1/9/89) (Baronet, Regency, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ 34th St. East, Waverly, and 23rd St. West Triplex; through March 2.)

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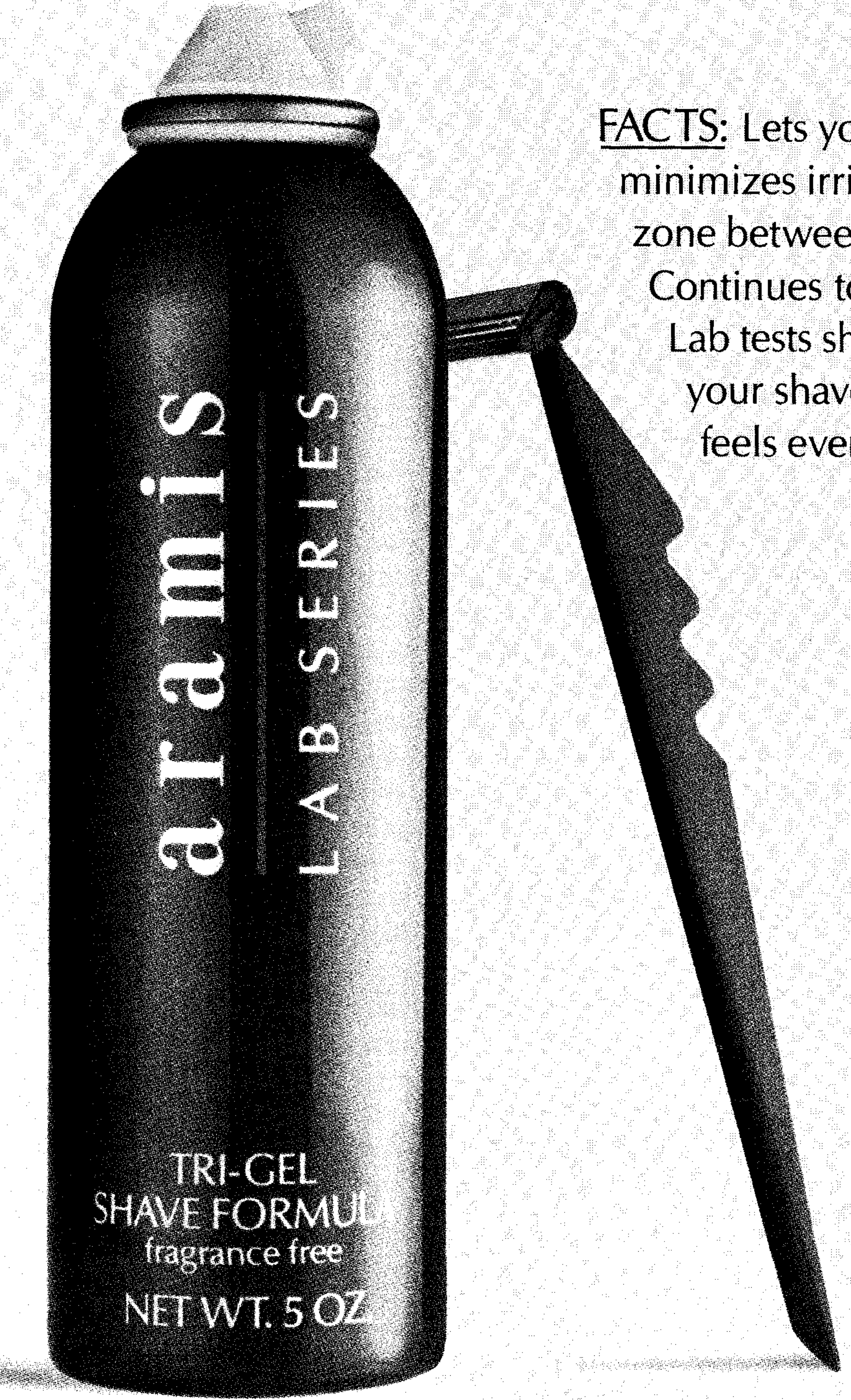
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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

THE terror we feel when we put ourselves in Salman Rushdie's shoes is a new kind. As far as we know, never before has an international lynch mob of millions called for the blood of someone like him—someone who is not a leader or an official, someone who until now was probably unknown to most of the people calling for his death and of whom they still know little, someone who is guilty mainly of unlucky timing in the publication of a book that was written in a tradition different from that of his persecutors, and was not intended for them. This is a new level of randomness, blindness, and disproportionate violence in the physics of hatred. But, as with an ordinary lynch mob, the evil here is the transformation of human beings into an undifferentiated mass, without thought or individuality, in the grip of a single murderous impulse.

Mr. Rushdie had every reason to think himself safe writing in England, enclosed by the Western world and its profound belief in questioning beliefs. What has happened to him seems to us totally out of scale—a nightmare version of childhood fears of punishment. The force unleashed against him is so irrational that to protest against it in the name of free speech seems itself irrational. Gestures like recalling envoys and closing embassies seem quaintly polite. The way in which Mr. Rushdie's apology was solicited and then turned into fuel for further hatred makes it clear what is to be expected from any attempts at communication.

This spectacle of enraged reaction not just to Mr. Rushdie's book but to Mr. Rushdie himself awakens all of us to our belief in our interconnectedness. When we imagine him writing his book, we visualize a normal-scale human being, part of a society of equals in which he is participating by sharing his thoughts and feelings—the very stuff of interconnectedness. But with this explosion of murderous intolerance he has had to disappear, and in his disappearance he seems tiny, silenced, and, above all, isolated. That isolation by terror from the rest of humanity is in itself a kind of death sentence.

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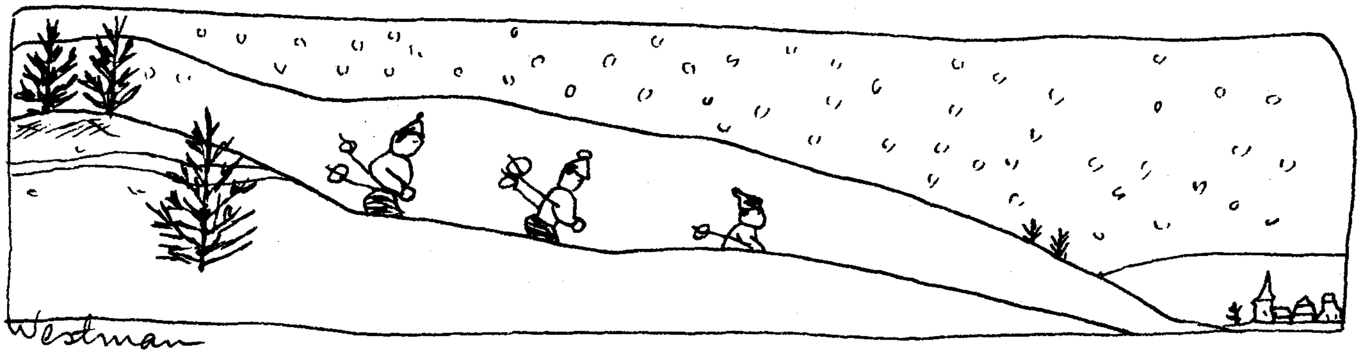
Temples of Thrift

WITH who knows how many Texas S. & L.s folding every week like Fifth Avenue umbrella peddlers' stands at the approach of a cop, and the tally of billions that will have to be paid to clean up after them rising higher and higher, we decided to look at a couple of banks as they should be: solid as rock, stately as courthouses, solemn as cathedrals. Temples of thrift.

From the outside, the bank on Seventy-third Street between Amsterdam Avenue and Broadway looks like a Florentine palazzo. From the inside, it looks like the New Haven railroad station, only bigger. It's an Apple Bank for Savings now, and there are little red apples adorning banners inside. But the name it shows to the world, carved in stone on its outside walls, is Central Savings Bank, and only Roman numerals will do for its birth dates: "CHARTERED MDCCCLIX ERECTED MCMXXVIII." Inside, the list of trustees, in carved columns, like the tablets of the Decalogue, begins with August Belmont. The tellers work behind a foot-thick, stomach-high wall of marble, dark green with white chunks scattered through like nuts. On top of the wall is a wrought-iron cage, surmounted at intervals by iron pots holding iron flowers. Before you approach this arena of sober transactions, you fill out your deposit slip on a black stone table with iron legs and five-toed iron feet. If the prospect is daunting, you may rest to collect yourself on low,



backless stone benches, also with feet. (Red plastic cushions have been spread over the benches, to make them endurable.) The windows are hung with golden folded curtains like the one at the Met. On the Seventy-third Street wall, above the door, a carved slogan—"INDUSTRY THRIFT PROSPERITY"—exhorts customers and employees alike. The builders liked it so much they repeated it on the Seventy-fourth Street wall.

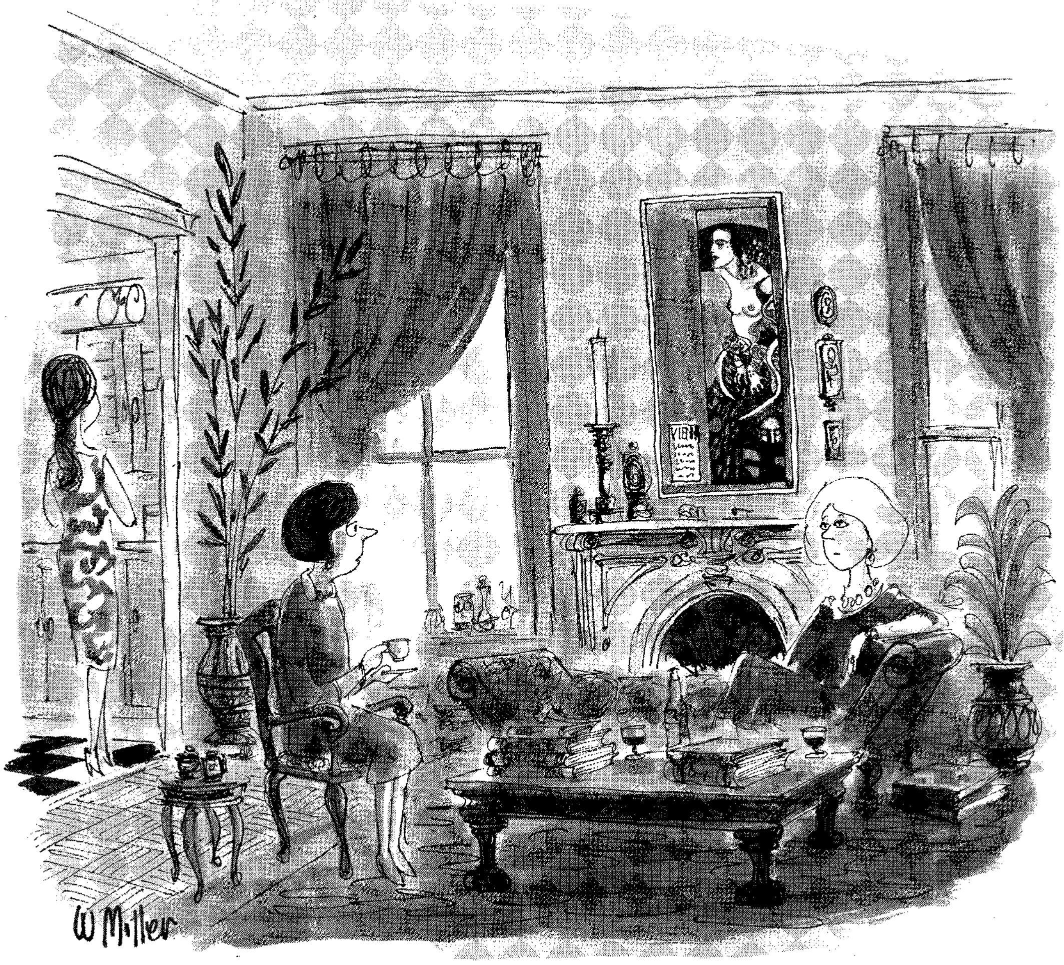
Whenever we go to Chinatown, we pass another such bank, on the Bowery just north of Grand Street. It's a Bowery Savings Bank, and its floor plan resembles a top-heavy numeral 9. The main entrance is through the stem. The message over the door here is "YOUR FINANCIAL WELFARE IS THE BUSINESS OF THIS BANK." (When we asked a friend who is an economist if there was some dollars-and-cents reason for such banks' architectural splendor, he told us that it was intended to convey the same reassurance as the words over this door. Before deposit insurance, the best indication a bank could give that it would not topple was an investment in several tons of stone.) The walls of the stem are hung with portraits of former bank chairmen and presidents, from the days of beards to the days of rep ties. The tellers here, too, in the top of the 9, work within a stone enclosure. And the walls are lined with twenty Corinthian columns. In a corner of the room we noticed a brass-railed staircase to the second floor. It made an entirely superfluous turn on its ascent, leaving a small landing half a story up. We studied this quirk as if it were a text, and deciphered this message: "We spare no expense in building staircases or in insuring your financial welfare." This was not a storefront fly-by-night in a shopping mall somewhere. This was a gold-standard bank, full of Coolidge dollars.

The bank on the Bowery was restored in 1980, and there is a display explaining the restoration and the bank's history. From it we learned that the twenty Corinthian columns, except for marble bases, are made of painted wood with plaster scrollwork. Evidently, the appearance of stone was thought to be as reassuring as stone. We left financially, though not aesthetically, confused.

The Game

THE outer boroughs of New York (particularly Staten Island and Brooklyn) and the Montreal suburb of Ville d'Anjou are probably the two centers of table hockey in the modern era, and some people feel that an affinity between these places goes even deeper than the presence in both of a lot of guys who happen to own Rick Benej's handmade table-hockey games: just before Marc Gelinas, Junior Roveto, Michel Decarie, and Daniel Bordeleau left Ville d'Anjou one recent Friday morning, on their way to the New York City table-hockey championships, at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Bay Ridge, they asked a friend who had been to Brooklyn if he could tell them the quickest way to get to Bay Ridge, and the friend replied that they should just point the car south and keep going until they found a place that felt like home.

Many observers believe that the dawn of the modern era in table hockey dates from a moment seven years ago when Rick Benej, of Carroll Gardens, with the encouragement of his wife, Jana, quit his job and began constructing table-hockey games out of walnut, Plexiglas, and stainless steel. Rick's version of the game is essentially the same as the Masonite-and-molded-plastic version that kids have been playing for years: small figures of hockey play-



"I know Beth from the days when 'Christina's World' was up where the Klimt is now."

"Tell everyone the honeymoon's over."

• •

ers, controlled by rods and springs, slide back and forth in slots. But in Rick's game the rink is about twice as big—twenty-six inches by sixty—and is made of polished Plexiglas, with the players and the nets and the puck roughly proportionate to those of the real game; the slots are longer and are cut in slants and hooks, so that the players can move in more complicated patterns; and the goaltender crouches in the middle of five separate short slots, so that he can cut down angles and clear the puck. Rick's game is full of wonderful details: above the boards there are Plexiglas dashers, to protect the crowd from flying pucks, and whereas in the old game each of the players faced front, was helmetless, and wore a perpetually goofy, John Candy-type smile, in Rick's game the players are depicted in alert profile and seem alive to the developing possibilities of the game. Their faces are miniature portraits of Rick's friends; one of the goaltenders, for instance, is Jana.

Rick's game has evolved differently in the Canadian and the American environments, however, because of a problem unique to Lilliputian sport; namely, that the puck and the net are so small that it is often hard to tell whether or not someone has scored. Up in Ville d'Anjou, players have decided that the best way to solve the problem is to insist that the puck has to go in the net and stay there. This has led to the development of what the New York guys refer to, a little disparagingly, as "the finesse game." The best player in the outer boroughs is Tony Mongeluzzi, a dealer in rock-and-roll memorabilia, who left his wife and children behind on a Caribbean holiday to come to the Knights of Columbus Hall in Bay Ridge and take on Ville d'Anjou's finest. He describes his game this way: "Speed. Power. Get the puck to the center and power it in. Drive for the net. Speed and power." In the no-finesse New York game, the tendency of a shot to hit the back of the net and bounce back out before anyone is sure it went in can produce, as Rick notes diplomatically in the rules, "differing viewpoints," and he has had to formalize a language of nuances enabling a referee to express the thought that he is not really sure what just happened.

At the tournament, where four games went on at once, the serious hockey players had to spend most of Friday and Saturday clearing away the riffraff in what seemed an endless series of elimination rounds, but by late Sunday afternoon the tournament was down to a small hard core—the bridge-and-tunnel guys of two countries.

The Knights of Columbus Hall was dark, and Rick Benej had clamped a desk lamp to the side of each game, making the rinks hard, bright white rectangles. The confrontation that everybody had been waiting for was taking place—Michel Decarie, who had proved himself over the weekend the best of the Canadians, was playing Tony Mongeluzzi in the semifinals—and about thirty spectators crowded around. Going into the third period of the fourth game of the semifinal, the score was tied: Michel had led, 3–0, but then Tony had come through with one of his legendary flurries—three goals in twenty-nine seconds. (Each period is three minutes long, and the playoffs are the best of five.) Between the periods, the two players consulted with their seconds. Marc Gelinas came over to Michel and said, in French, "Michel, you are playing with too much finesse. All winter long, we spoke of Mongeluzzi. Now you must play him with more than your skill. My friend, you must play him with your heart." Michel nodded grimly, embraced Marc, and walked back to his chair for the third period.

On the other side of the hall, Tony Mongeluzzi had been psyching himself, repeating, "This period's *mine*, this period's *mine*. It's the *third* period. It's *my* period!" At last, he was ready, and returned to his seat, surrounded by a throng of cheering friends.

Tony dominated the first two minutes of the third period, pouncing on free pucks in Michel's zone and slamming them back toward the goalie. Michel coolly kept a hand on his goaltender, waiting for a break instead of trying to clear the puck and risk a bad pass. With a minute left in the game, he chose his spot. Tony shanked a shot, and Michel, picking up the puck with his goaltender, made a perfect breakaway pass, defenseman to center. Tony moved a hand to his goaltender and squared him away for a shot from the slot. But Michel, instead of shooting, slipped a pass to his right wing, who was waiting, forgotten, his stick turned away from the net, by the post. In one movement, he accepted the pass and drove it on his backhand, low on the stick side, past the helpless goalie. Tony moaned, and a few seconds later the game was over.

"It is a long drive back home," Michel said in his acceptance speech a little later, after winning an anti-climactic final. "But, my friends, this"—he flourished his trophy—"will make it go by just a little bit faster." After the award ceremony, the four friends went downstairs for a quick dinner in the Knights' canteen—their one dinner out in New York—and then left for Ville d'Anjou.

"He played errorless," Tony Mongeluzzi said later. "Just errorless. He found holes where there were no holes. See, I don't play a typical goalie style. I don't like to hug the post, because I want to be ready to shoot the puck up to my defensemen, like Ron Hextall. But I figure if a guy can beat me on the backhand in that much space—well, then he deserves to beat me. Anyway, it wasn't his right wing who beat me, really. That center of his is so accurate that I had to concentrate on him for the shot, and then when the right wing can take a pass and shoot in one motion . . . Well, all his guys came together today. His center, his defensemen headmanning the puck to his forwards, the goalie coming through big—hey, what can I say? They played as a team."

In Progress

WE had no idea that 1989 was the Year of the Diary until we read *Diarist's Journal*, a fourteen-issue-old monthly tabloid out of Lansford, Pennsylvania, which Ed Gildea, the founder and publisher and co-editor, believes to be the only periodical in the world devoted exclusively to diary- and journal-keeping. We like lots of things about *Diarist's Journal*, but most of all we like Ed Gildea's candor concerning the genesis of the Year of the Diary. "It's not an official designation," he told us the other day. "We declared it ourselves, because somebody had to do it and we thought it would help circulation. We have about four hundred subscribers. We're growing, but we thought that by now we'd have twice that many. We have twenty-three subscribers in Hawaii, and we've published excerpts from a diarist in Sri Lanka. We've printed entries from the diary of a ninety-two-year-old man and from the diary of a teen-ager named Julie, who confessed in her diary that she had been reading her sister's diary. We have Jane Begos writing about women's diaries and Shelley Barre writing about diaries in general, and, best of all, we have Edward Robb Ellis writing a column for us. Have you spoken to Eddie?"

We said we hadn't, and the next afternoon we dropped by Mr. Ellis's brownstone, in Chelsea. There he fed us coffee and doughnuts and talked about diaries.

Besides writing his column for *Diarist's Journal* (February's was about Henri Frederic Amiel, a nineteenth-century Swiss diarist), Mr. Ellis serves as a consultant for Letts of London (and, more recently, of Hauppauge, New York), a hundred-and-seventy-seven-year-old publisher of diaries, which will soon publish a line of diaries designed by Ellis, and as a consultant for the in-progress New-York Historical Society and Yale University Press *Encyclopedia of New York City*. He also has a work in progress on the history of mysticism, and, of course, his own diary.

Mr. Ellis's diary, squeezed into sixty-one volumes, is eighteen million words long and counting. Except for a fortnight in 1965, at the time his wife died, he told us, he has kept a daily log since December 27, 1927, when he was sixteen years old. He is a tireless crusader for an American diary repository. "In 1980, my diary was shipped to the University of Wyoming," he said. "I have dupes of everything I've written since then, but the entire original, ex-

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cept 1988—I haven't shipped it yet—is in Laramie. I didn't want to give the diary up, but Gene Gressley, who is the archivist at the American Heritage Center, in Laramie, asked me a simple question: 'What about fire, Eddie?' I looked around. I had fifteen thousand books in this place. I used to smoke. I said, 'Come and get it.' "

Mr. Ellis is a big, round man, with a big, round face, a full head of swept-back brown hair, and a full white beard. Around the house, he wears cowboy boots, slacks, a hooded sweatshirt, a shawl that hangs like a gym towel around his neck, and a red beret. He looks a little like Santa Claus moonlighting as a boxing trainer.

"I'm about ninety-nine per cent honest in my diary," he went on. "I've stipulated that when I die it can be opened and published, as long as the contents don't hurt any living persons or their relatives. I don't keep an eye to posterity, but I'm *aware* that my work may be reproduced and studied. I decided long ago that it—posterity—can't influence me, or the diary will be artificial. Once, a long time ago, an actress friend asked me to read out loud what I had said about her in my diary. I found the right page and realized I hadn't been kind at all. I had to ad-lib new words, just like that."

His longest entry—fourteen pages, double-spaced, no paragraphs—came after the birth of his daughter, he said. The shortest entry is "Hung Over." "That's in there a lot, but not in the last ten years," he said. "I'm an alcoholic, a bookaholic, and a workaholic. The first one is the only one I'm recovering from."

Eddie asked if we kept a diary, and we said, "Yes. Well, no. Sort of—when we're out of town. Not really."

We should, he said.

We knew that, we said. Did he have any tips?

He gave us the following:

(1) Write every day in the same place, at the same time—morning or afternoon or evening or night. The exact hour isn't important.

(2) Keep your diary locked. Don't let *anyone* read it—not even your spouse.

(3) Don't use slang unless you note the meaning. "If you write down 'I hear you, I hear you,' as I did the other day, recording a cabbie's conversation, and don't explain it, no one will be able to understand it in a hundred years."

(4) Number all your pages, and keep a wide left margin for binding.

(5) If you write in longhand, use a pen. If you type, use a good ribbon. Use only the best paper—anything less won't last.

(6) Pick a title. "Mine used to be 'Briefly I Tarry.' Now it's 'The Ellis Diary.' "

(7) Observe details. "I have notes about platform shoes. Do you remember them? That information might come in very handy one day for a historian."

(8) Note the price of everything. "I have records of dinners in New Orleans during the Depression that cost me thirty-five cents. Hard to believe, but there it is."

(9) Include the name and address of any restaurant you go to. Chances are very good it will be gone in a year, not to mention a decade.

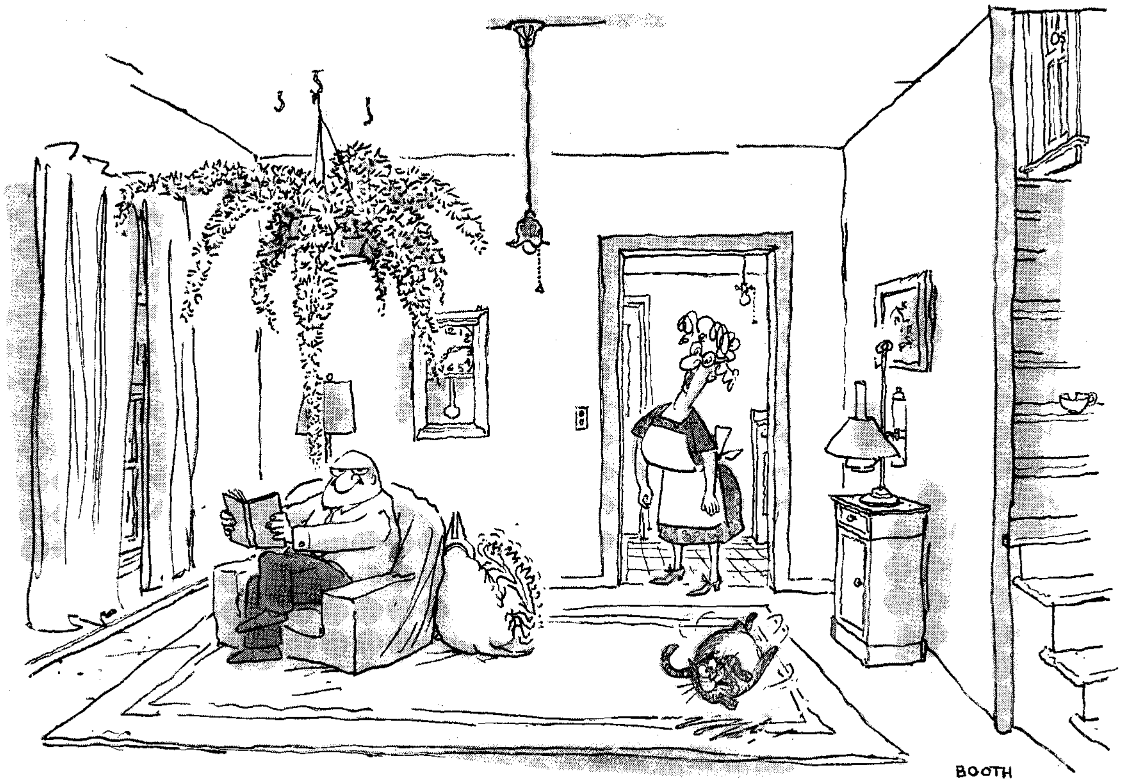
(10) Use a person's full name. If the name appears regularly, you can shorten it after the first notation.

(11) Record all current jokes. "I have about thirty Joe McCarthy jokes in my diary, like the time he and his wife hear the National Anthem and he says to her, 'Stand up, dear, they're playing our song.' "

(12) Note the day of the week as well as the month and the year.

(13) Keep the entries strictly chronological. Forget putting the most important event of the day at the top. Forget writing an essay.

Mr. Ellis stopped us at the door to say, "Remember, a diarist is a writer who watches himself watching himself. And one last thing: I said a diary entry had best be strictly chronological, but that isn't quite true. If on a given day I come up with any philosophical thoughts—if I've learned anything during the day that I can put down in the abstract—I wait until the very end to do it. That way, the day's entry can taper off toward the heavens."



"The Pentagon is not getting nearly as much pie as they used to get."

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TICKETS

I HAVE decided to form a new group and am now contemplating the membership, the prospective membership, of my new group. My decision was prompted by a situation that arose not long ago vis-à-vis the symphony. We say "the symphony" because there is only one symphony orchestra here, as opposed to other cities where there are several and one must distinguish among them. The situation had to do with an invitation my wife received from Barbet, the artist, to attend the symphony with him on the evening of the ninth of March.

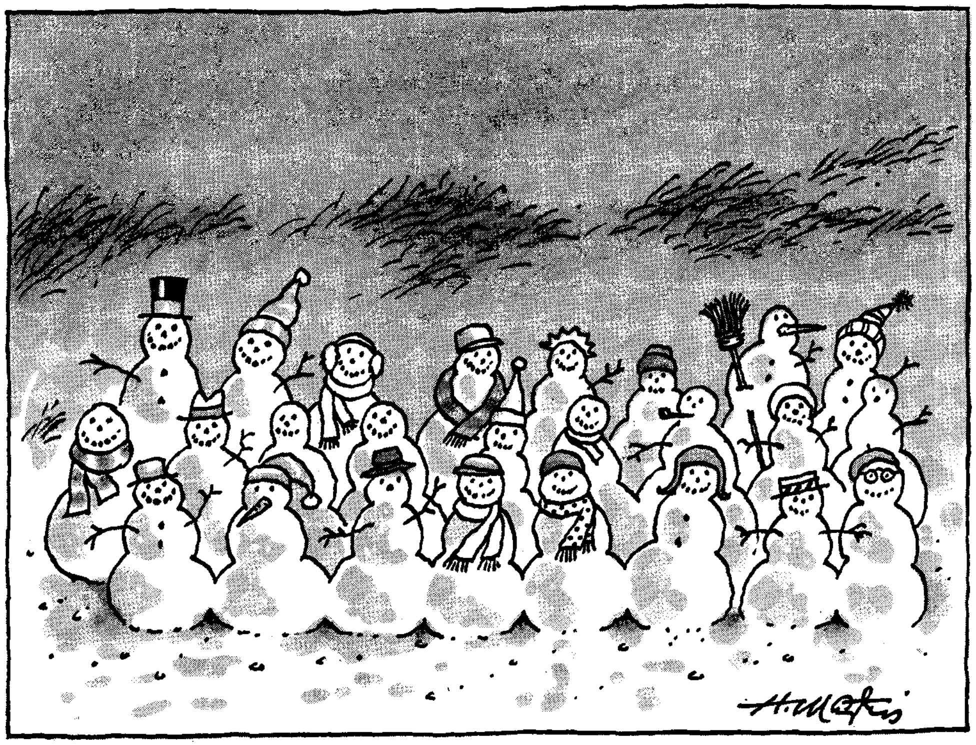
My wife, as it happened, was already planning to attend the performance of the ninth of March with her friend Morton. Barbet had extra tickets and wanted my wife to join his group and was gracious enough to enlarge his invitation to include my wife's friend, Morton. My wife could join his group, Barbet said, and took special pains to make clear that this invitation extended to Morton also. My wife responded, with characteristic warmth, with a counter-invitation, saying that she already had tickets for the ninth of March including extra tickets, that Barbet was most welcome to join her group, the group of my wife and Morton, and that the members of Barbet's group were also most welcome to join my wife's group, the group consisting, at that moment, of herself and Morton. My wife had previously asked me, with the utmost cordiality, if I wished to go to the symphony with her on the ninth of March, despite being fully apprised of my views on the matter of going to the symphony.

I had replied that I did not care to join her at the symphony on the occasion in question, but had inquired, out of politeness, what the program was to be, although my wife is fully aware that my views on the symphony will never change. My views on the symphony are that only the socially malformed would choose to put on a dark suit, a white shirt, a red tie, and so on, black shoes, and so on, and go to the symphony, there to sit pinned between two other people, albeit one of them one's own warm and sweet-smelling wife, for two hours or more, listening to music that may very well exist, in equally knowing and adroit performances, in one's own home, on records. That is to say that such people, the socially malformed (my wife, of course, excepted), go to the symphony out of extramusical need, clear extramusical need. But because of the raging politeness that always obtains between us I asked her what the program was to be on the ninth of March, and she told me that it was to be an all-Laurenti evening.

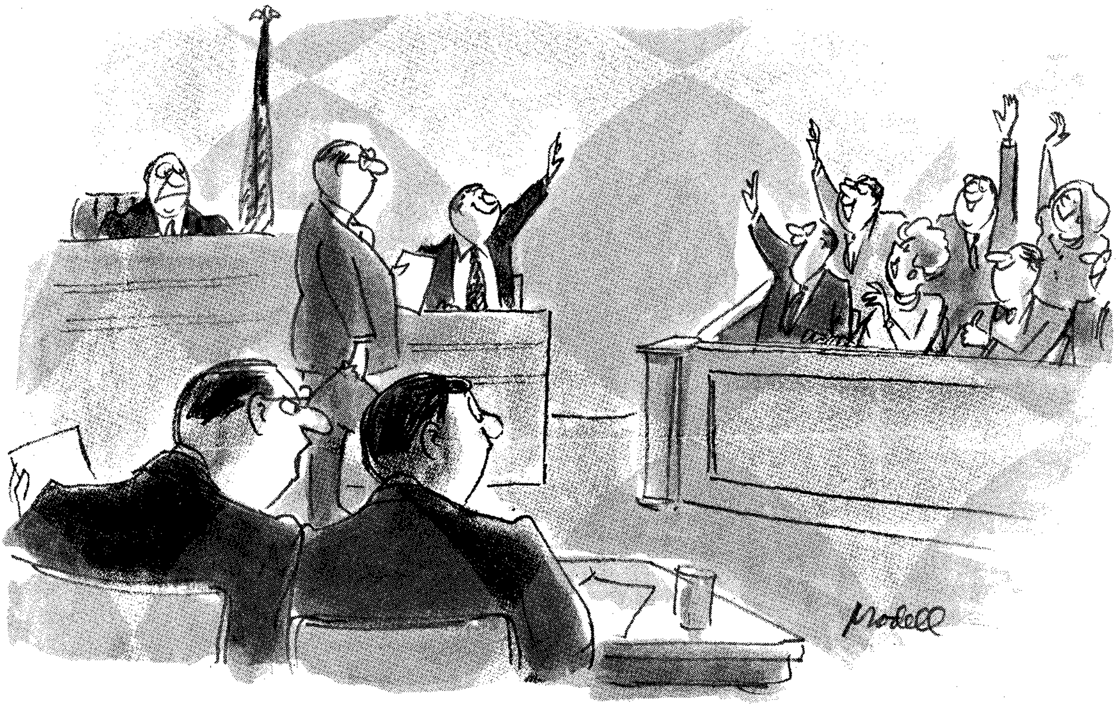
Laurenti is a composer held in quite high esteem hereabouts, perhaps less so elsewhere but of that I cannot judge, he is attached to the symphony as our composer-in-residence. It was to be, she told me, an all-Laurenti performance with just a bit of Orff by way of curtain-raiser, the conductor of the symphony, Gilley, which he pronounces "Gil-lay," having decided that Orff would make an appropriate, even delicious, curtain-raiser for Laurenti. While I am respectful of Laurenti's tragedy, what is called in some circles Laurenti's tragedy—that he has not a shred of talent of any description—still the prospect of sitting tightly wedged between two other human beings for the length of an all-Laurenti evening would have filled me with dismay had I not been aware that the invitation from my wife was perfectly pro forma. It appears that Gilley is sleeping with Mellow the new first-desk cellist, who sits at the head of the cellos with her golden cornrows, or so it is said at the Opera-Cellar, where I have a drink from time to time, especially often during the rather hectic period when my wife was both chairperson of the Friends of French Art Fandango and head whipper-in for the Detached Retina Bal.

It could be relied upon that Barbet, being an artist, would respond with enthusiasm to the notion of yet another disastrous all-Laurenti evening, possibly with the idea of mocking Laurenti behind his hand, although Barbet, as an artist,

THE SNOWS OF YESTERYEAR: THIRTIES, FORTIES, FIFTIES



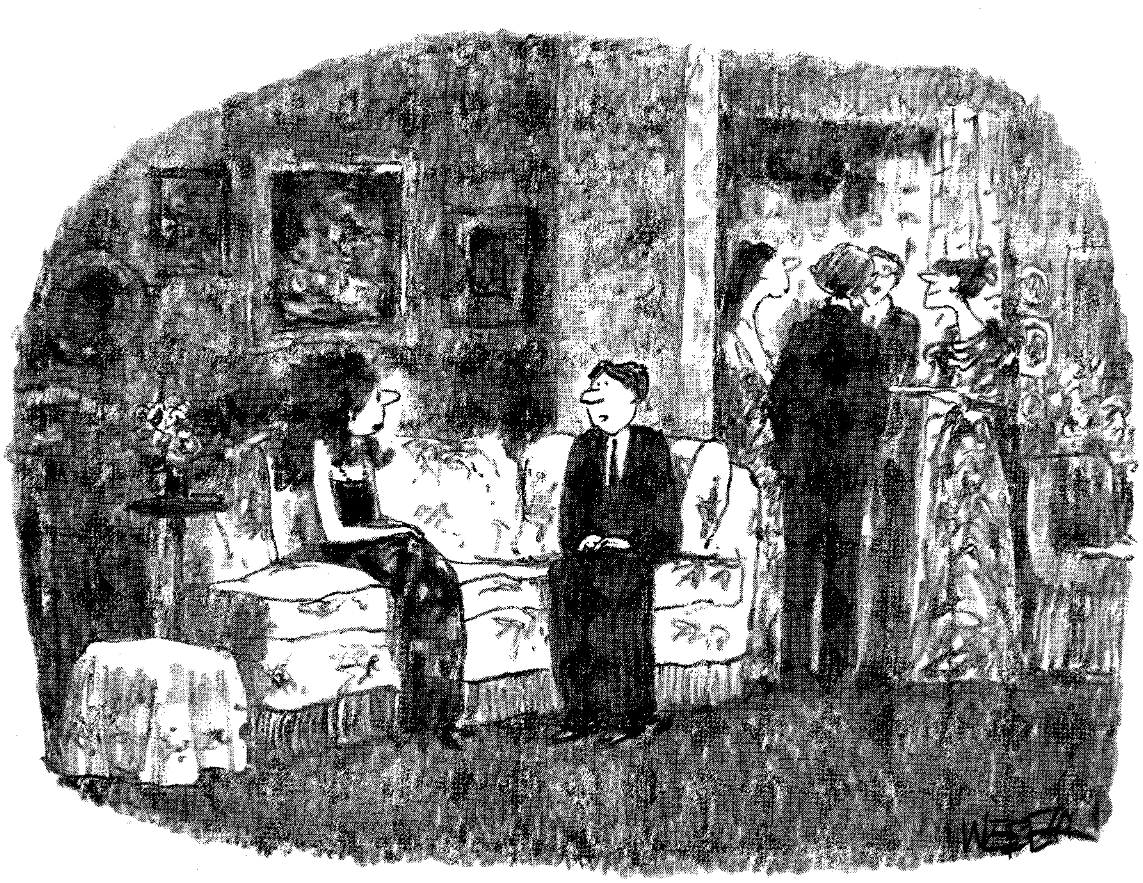
Front row: 1930, 1931, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1938, 1939
Second row: 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1949
Back row: 1950, 1951, 1952, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1959
Missing: 1932, 1937, 1940, 1953, 1958



"I still say you never can tell which way a jury will go."

would not literally mock Laurenti behind his hand but rather in plain speech, or ironic speech rotten with wit. Barbet, being an artist of a particular kind, no doubt feels that a mocking attitude is appropriate to an artist of his kind, known not only hereabouts but in much larger cities, cities with two and even three distinct symphony orchestras, not even counting a Youth Symphony or one maintained by the Department of Sanitation. Barbet's reputation rests, not unimpressively, upon his "Cancellation" paintings—or simply "cancellations," in the language of his métier—a form he is believed to have invented and in which he displays his rotten wit along with the usual exhausting manual dexterity. The "cancellations" are paintings in which a rendering of a well-known picture, an Edvard Munch, say, has superimposed on it a smaller, but yet not small, rendering of another but perhaps not so well known picture, an El Lissitzky, say, for example the "Untitled" of 1919-20, a rather geometrical affair of squares and circles, reds and blacks, whose impetuses not only contest, contradict, the impetuses of the Munch, the Scandinavian miserablism of the Munch, but effectively *cancel* it, an action one can see taking place before one's eyes. I must say in his defense (because what Barbet is doing, has been doing all his life as a painter, is fundamentally indefensible), I must say in Barbet's defense that the contestation between the two paintings he has chosen to superimpose, one on the other, is of a very high order, is of substantial visual interest just *as paint*, and that the way the historically unrelated paintings relate to each other *as forms or collections of forms* is a value in addition to the value one awards the destructive act that is the soul of Barbet's painting, as much as the decayed wit displayed in titling these things "Improved Painting # 1," "Improved Painting # 2," "Improved Painting # 19"—all these values must be taken into account in deciding whether or not Barbet should be shot. I myself feel that yes, Barbet should be shot, on the basis of ill will. But because Barbet is one of our few, our very few, genuine artists, we embrace him. This is not to say that the work of many other painters not our own is not similarly indefensible and that they, too, from a strictly construed moral-aesthetic standpoint, should not be shot. There are forty-four examples of Barbet's work in the museum, I refer to our quite grand local museum, in which my wife's family's money has had quite an important role over the years; it can be imagined how much I detest the phrase "provincial museum" but there is no other way of describing the place, which is, of course, quite grand, with its old part done in the classical mode and its new part done in a mode that respects the classical mode to the point of being indistinguishable from the classical mode but is also fresh, new, contemporary, and ironic.

THIS Morton who has been my wife's friend for ten years at least, who is forever calling her on the telephone so that I have come to recognize his voice although I have never met him—I recognize not only his voice but the characteristic pause before he asks if my wife is there, the freighted pause, I recognize that and say yes, Morton, just a moment, I'll see if she's in—this Morton, on the other hand, is a singer, and thus has no irony. He has, however, a legitimate interest in the symphony, as well as a truly frightening voice, easily recognized, a bass voice of remarkable color and strength, and patina; it is not wrong to add "patina" since this Morton is a man of a certain age, not old in any sense, but not young either, and of course not new to my wife, whose constant companion he has been for the past ten years. Morton does not go to the symphony or to musical occasions of any sort merely to make jokes or scoff behind his hand. And considered in the light of the possible attendance of someone like Morton, a sage and well-tempered listener, even some of Laurenti is perhaps worth hearing, the "Songs" perhaps, which draw from reviewers notices that begin "Among the best, perhaps, of this fluent but uneven composer's efforts are the 'Songs.' " I must tell you that last night I slept with my wife, I use the term "slept with" in the sense of congress, it was four-fifteen in the morning and I awoke with an itch to sleep with my wife, who was sleeping beside



"I'm a very different person on the slopes."

me as she has every night for the past fifteen years or thereabouts. My wife appeared to me to be a young person, that was interesting, I of course have no idea how I appeared to her but she appeared to me to be a young person and together after arduous endeavor we achieved quite sublime heights of sexual communion, such as one does not often achieve, we achieved that, at about four-fifteen in the morning, last night, the children sleeping soundly, the dog awake, she said in the morning, "Good morning, sexy boy."

It is the case that Barbet actively dislikes Morton, whereas Morton is absolutely indifferent to Barbet. Morton acts upon Barbet like a rug that makes you ill, a rug that is your own rug, clean, in good condition, not frayed or stained, but suddenly looking at the rug you are made ill, a wind around the heart, looking at the gray, green, and yellow rug, with its melon-shaped figure, purchased, yes, at Klecksel's, where the very best recent rugs, V'Soke and the like, are to be found (as well as both Klecksel and Jeri, his girlfriend, yes, even Klecksel has a girlfriend, so bounteous/fortunate are the times, even Klecksel has a girlfriend and the two are always at the symphony, or at the opera, or at the ballet, giving one very odd feelings, in that the person who sells you rugs, whom you regard as a rug person, someone who swims into your ken when rugs are an issue, and then swims out again when the issue has been resolved, must also be regarded as part of a social pair on quite another plane, and not just part of a social pair but part of a set of *new lovers*, God help us all), illness ensues. Morton is a very fine singer, a bass with the opera, where he sings Hunding in "Die Walküre," Méphistophélès in "La Damnation de Faust," etc. I find a slightly nasal quality to his singing, but perhaps I am imagining it. He is a handsome fellow, of course, my wife's self-regard would not allow her to be seen out with anyone who is not a handsome fellow. The nose is quite large but there is, I suppose, no necessary connection between the quite large nose and the slightly nasal quality he brings to Hunding or Méphistophélès or Abul in "Der Barbier von Baghdad," the last a role in which his comic flair, what is called in the newspaper his comic flair, is employed to great advantage. I have seen him many times at the opera (which offers something for the eye as opposed to the symphony where one can watch the kettledrums going out of tune) and have found his performances juicy and his comic flair endurable and have chosen him as a member of my new group, an honor he may, of course, decline.

My group will be unlike any existing group, will exist in contradistinction to all existing groups, over against all existing groups, will be in fine an anti-group, given the ethos of our city, the hysterical culture of our city. My new group will contain my wife, that sugarplum, and her friend Morton and a Gypsy girl and a blind man and will take its ethos from the car wash. My new group will march along the boulevards shouting "Let's go! Let's go!" with the enthusiasm of the young men at the car wash who are forever shouting "Let's go! Let's go!" to inspirit their fellows, if there is a moment of quiet at the car wash someone will take up the cry "Let's go! Let's go!" and then others will take up the cry "Let's go! Let's go!," shouting "Let's go! Let's go!" over and over, as long as the car wash washes.

—Donald Barthelme

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"Still, the records may not be as exact as we'd like," Burton says. "For instance, Mary Todd Lincoln's age was recorded as 27 in the 1850 census and only 35 in the 1860 one. Of course, she or somebody told the census-taker wrong. But *neither* age is right. Mary Todd was born in 1818. She was really 42 and 52 [in 1950 and 1960]."—*Lynda R. Stephenson in the Chicago Tribune Magazine.*

Women!

A WEDGE OF SHADE

EVERY place that I could name you, in the whole world around us, has better things about it than Argus, North Dakota. I just happened to grow up there for eighteen years, and the soil got to be part of me, the air has something in it that I breathed. Argus water doesn't taste as good as water in the cities. Still, the first thing I do, walking back into my mother's house, is stand at the kitchen sink and toss down glass after glass.

"Are you filled up?" My mother stands behind me. "Sit down if you are."

She's tall and board-square, French-Chippewa, with long arms and big knuckles. Her face is rawboned, fierce, and almost masculine in its edges and planes. Several months ago, a beauty operator convinced her that she should feminize her look with curls. Now the permanent, grown out in grizzled streaks, bristles like the coat of a terrier. I don't look like her. Not just the hair, since hers is salt-and-pepper and mine is a reddish brown, but my build. I'm short, boxy, more like my Aunt Mary. Like her, I can't seem to shake this town. I keep coming back here.

"There's jobs at the beet plant," my mother says.

This rumor, probably false, since the plant is in a slump, drops into the dim, close air of the kitchen. We have the shades drawn because it's a hot June, over a hundred degrees, and we're trying to stay cool. Outside, the water has been sucked from everything. The veins in the leaves are hollow, the ditch grass is crackling. The sky has absorbed every drop. It's a thin whitish-blue veil stretched from end to end over us, a flat gauze tarp. From the depot, I've walked here beneath it, dragging my suitcase.

We're sweating as if we're in an oven, a big messy one. For a week, it's been too hot to clean much or even move, and the crops are stunted, failing. The farmer next to us just sold his field for a subdivision, but the construction workers aren't doing much. They're wearing wet rags on their heads, sitting near the house sites in the brilliance of noon. The studs of wood stand upright over them, but uselessly—nothing casts shadows. The sun has dried them up, too.

"The beet plant," my mother says again.

"Maybe so," I say, and then, because I've got something bigger on my mind, "Maybe I'll go out there and apply."

"Oh?" She is intrigued now.

"God, this is terrible!" I take the glass of water in my hand and tip some onto my head. I don't feel cooler, though; I just feel the steam rising off me.

"The fan broke down," she states. "Both of them are kaput now. The motors or something. If Mary would get the damn tax refund, we'd run out to Pamida, buy a couple more, set up a breeze. Then we'd be cool out here."

"Your garden must be dead," I say, lifting the edge of the pull shade.

"It's sick, but I watered. And I won't mulch; that draws the damn slugs."

"Nothing could live out there, no bug." My eyes smart from even looking at the yard, which is a clear sheet of sun, almost incandescent.

"You'd be surprised."

I wish I could blurt it out, just tell her. Even now, the words swell in my mouth, the one sentence, but I'm scared, and with good reason. There is this about my mother: it is awful to see her angry. Her lips press together and she stiffens herself within, growing wooden, silent. Her features become fixed and remote, she will not speak. It takes a long time, and until she does you are held in suspense. Nothing that she ever says, in the end, is as bad as that feeling of dread. So I wait, half believing that she'll figure out my secret for herself, or drag it out of me, not that she ever tries. If I'm silent, she hardly notices. She's not like Aunt Mary, who forces me to say more than I know is on my mind.

My mother sighs. "It's too hot to bake. It's too hot to cook. But it's too hot to eat anyway."

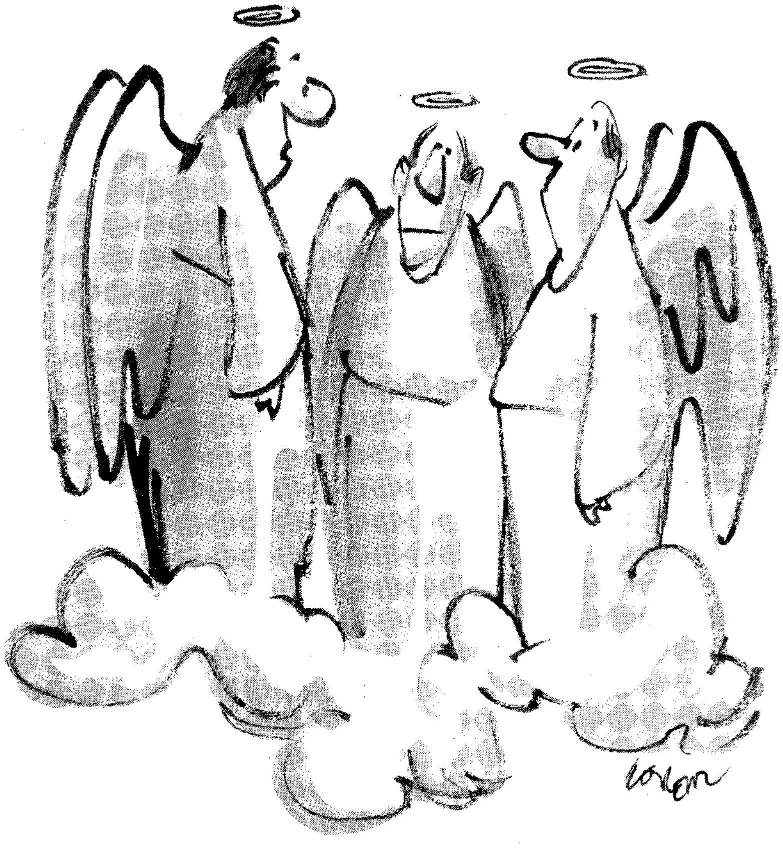
She's talking to herself, which makes me reckless. Perhaps she is so preoccupied by the heat that I can slip my announcement past her. I should just say it, but I lose nerve, make an introduction that alerts her. "I have something to tell you."

I've cast my lot; there's no going back unless I think quickly. My thoughts hum.

But she waits, forgetting the heat for a moment.

"Ice," I say. "We have to have ice." I speak intensely, leaning toward her, almost glaring, but she is not fooled.

"Don't make me laugh," she says. "There's not a cube in town. The refrigera-



"We won't be seeing Harold anymore. He was born again."

tors can't keep cold enough." She eyes me the way a hunter eyes an animal about to pop from its den and run.

"O.K." I break down. "I really do have something." I stand, turn my back. In this lightless warmth I'm dizzy, almost sick. Now I've gotten to her and she's frightened to hear, breathless.

"Tell me," she urges. "Go on, get it over with."

And so I say it. "I got married." There is a surge of relief, a wind blowing through the room, but then it's gone. The curtain flaps and we're caught again, stunned in an even denser heat. It's now my turn to wait, and I whirl around and sit right across from her. Now is the time to tell her his name, a Chippewa name that she'll know from the papers, since he's notorious. Now is the time to get it over with. But I can't bear the picture she makes, the shock that parts her lips, the stunned shade of hurt in her eyes. I have to convince her, somehow, that it's all right.

"You hate weddings! Just think, just picture it. Me, white net. On a day like this. You, stuffed in your summer wool, and Aunt Mary, God knows . . . and the tux, the rental, the groom . . ."

Her head had lowered as my words fell on her, but now her forehead tips up and her eyes come into view, already hardening. My tongue flies back into my mouth.

She mimics, making it a question, "The groom . . ."

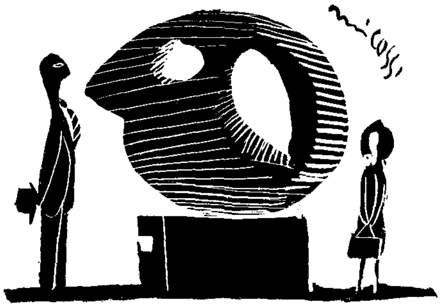
I'm caught, my lips half open, a stuttering noise in my throat. How to begin? I have rehearsed this, but my lines melt away, my opening, my casual introductions. I can think of nothing that would convince her of how much more he is than the captions beneath the photos. There is no picture adequate, no representation that captures him. So I just put my hand across the table and I touch her hand. "Mother," I say, as if we're in a staged drama, "he'll arrive here shortly."

There is something forming in her, some reaction. I am afraid to let it take complete shape. "Let's go out and wait on the steps, Mom. Then you'll see him."

"I do not understand," she says in a *frighteningly* neutral voice. This is what I mean. Everything is suddenly forced, unnatural—we're reading lines.

"He'll approach from a distance." I can't help speaking like a bad actor. "I told him to give me an hour. He'll wait, then he'll come walking down the road."

We rise and unstick our blouses from our stomachs, our skirts from the backs of our legs. Then we walk out front in single file, me behind, and settle ourselves on the middle step. A scrubby box-elder tree on one side casts a light shade, and the dusty lilacs seem to catch a little breeze on the other. It's not so bad out here, still hot, but not so dim, contained. It is worse past the trees. The heat shimmers in a band, rising off the fields, out of the spars and bones of houses that will wreck our view. The horizon and the edge of town show through the gaps in the framing now, and as we sit we watch the workers move, slowly, almost in a practiced recital, back and forth. Their headcloths hang to their shoulders, their hard hats are dabs of yellow, their white T-shirts blend into the fierce air and sky. They don't seem to be doing anything, although we hear faint thuds from their hammers. Otherwise, except for the whistles of a few birds, there is silence. Certainly we don't speak.



It is a longer wait than I anticipated, maybe because *he wants to give* me time. At last the shadows creep out, hard, hot, charred, and the heat begins to lengthen and settle. We are going into the worst of the afternoon when a dot at the end of the road begins to form.

IDEAL CITY

Sometimes the weather was nice and time was ample
And you seemed to step forth onto gigantic stones,
To step clear and find yourself in an Ideal City.

It was a place most unlike those gray convolutions,
Those tortuous inclinations, mechanisms of defense,
The medieval warren in which it had been imagined.

Where had been human filth and the communal fosse,
You saw a grand esplanade richly inlaid with marble;
Where were sordid activities and unavoidable violence,

You found doors standing open and not one inhabitant.
How you longed to set out through that city of light,
To stroll under its porticoes, idle among its façades!

But the air you discovered, a blueness run everywhere,
Was the sort of perfection none may breathe, and soon
You and that inhuman order were forced to depart:

You to return to the source of desiring, and it
To struggle up, away, into its own mild sky,
Trying to exist apart, as an idea endowed

With turtledoves and two octagonal wellheads,
With a centrally planned church and topiary trees,
Like the scene pictured once in the fortified town

Of Urbino and built up in paint years ago
By Bramante, possibly, or by Laurana,
Or by somebody else of like mind.

—George Bradley

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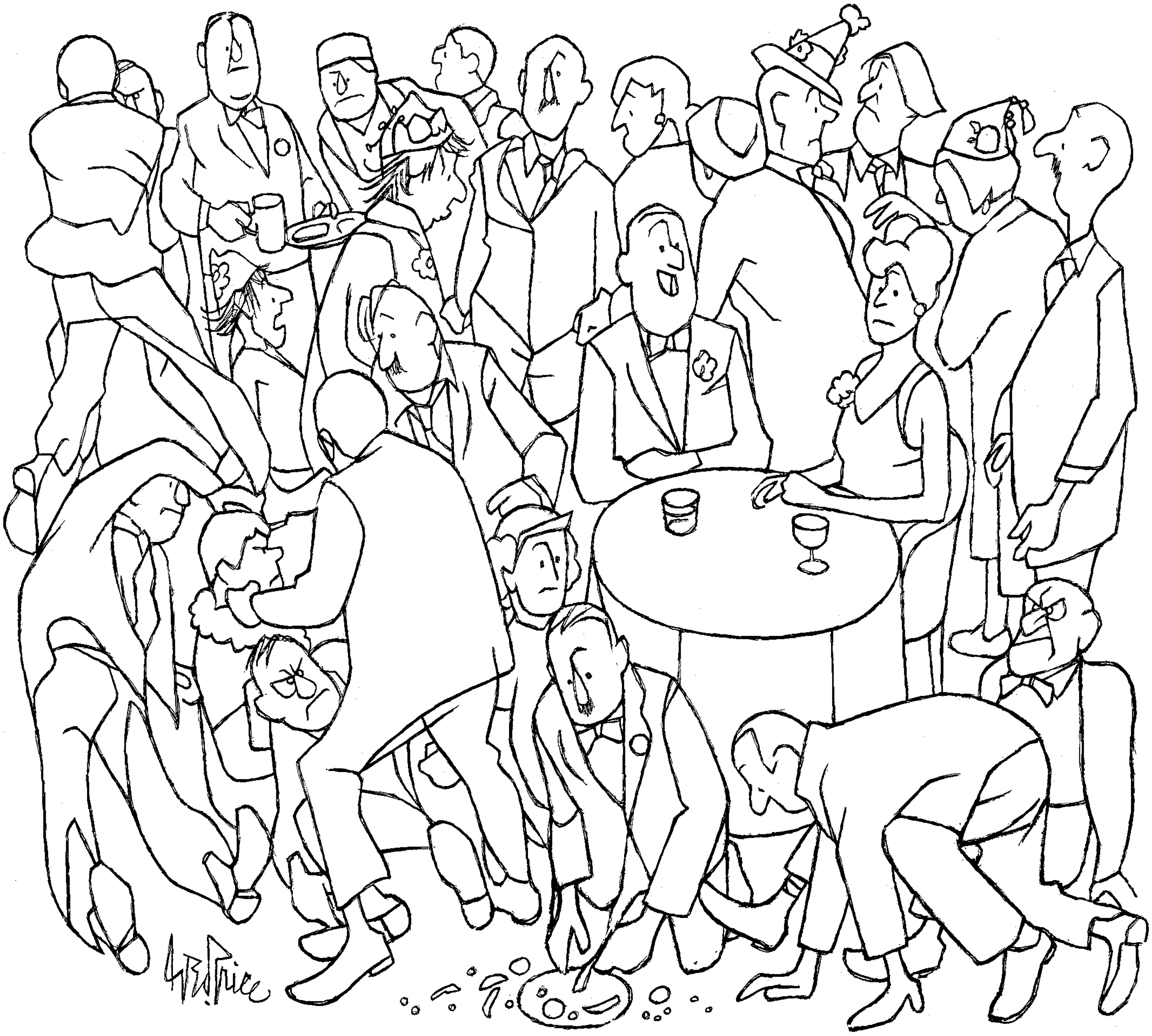

"It doesn't get any better than this, Shirley."

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Mom and I are both watching. We have not moved our eyes around much, and we blink and squint to try and focus. The dot doesn't change, not for a long while. And then it suddenly springs clear in relief—a silhouette, lost for a moment in the shimmer, reappearing. In that shining expanse he is a little wedge of moving shade. He continues, growing imperceptibly, until there are variations in the outline, and it can be seen that he is large. As he passes the construction workers, they turn and stop, all alike in their hats, stock-still.

Growing larger yet, as if he has absorbed their stares, he nears us. Now we can see the details. He is dark, the first thing. His arms are thick, his chest is huge, and the features of his face are wide and open. He carries nothing in his hands. He wears a black T-shirt, the opposite of the construction workers, and soft jogging shoes. His jeans are held under his stomach by a belt with a star beaded on the buckle. His hair is long, in a tail. I am the wrong woman for him. I am paler, shorter, un-magnificent. But I stand up. Mom joins me, and I answer proudly when she asks, "His name?"

"His name is Gerry—" Even now I can't force his last name through my lips. But Mom is distracted by the sight of him anyway.

We descend one step, and stop again. It is here we will receive him. Our hands are folded at our waists. We're balanced, composed. He continues to stroll toward us, his white smile widening, his eyes filling with the sight of me as mine are filling with him. At the end of the road behind him, another dot has appeared. It is fast-moving and the sun flares off it twice: a vehicle. Now there are two figures—one approaching in a spume of dust from the rear, and Gerry, unmindful, not slackening or quickening his pace, continuing on. It is like a choreography design. They move at parallel speeds in front of our eyes. Then, at the same moment, at the end of our yard, they conclude the performance; both of them halt.

Gerry stands, looking toward us, his thumbs in his belt. He nods respectfully to Mom, looks calmly at me, and half smiles. He raises his brows, and we're suspended. Officer Lovchik emerges from the police car, stooped and tired. He walks up behind Gerry and I hear the snap of handcuffs, then I jump. I'm stopped by Gerry's gaze, though, as he backs away from me, still smiling tenderly. I am paralyzed halfway down the walk. He kisses the air while Lovchik cautiously prods at him, fitting his prize into the car. And then the doors slam, the engine roars, and they back out and turn around. As they move away there is no siren. I think I've heard Lovchik mention questioning. I'm sure it is lots of fuss for nothing, a mistake, but it cannot be denied—this is terrible timing.

I shake my shoulders, smooth my skirt, and turn to my mother with a look of outrage. "How do you like that?" I try.

She's got her purse in one hand, her car keys out.

"Let's go," she says.

"O.K.," I answer. "Fine. Where?"

"Aunt Mary's."

"I'd rather go and bail him out, Mom."

"Bail," she says. "*Bail?*"

She gives me such a look of cold and furious surprise that I sink immediately into the front seat, lean back against the vinyl. I almost welcome the sting of the heated plastic on my back, thighs, shoulders.

Aunt Mary lives at the rear of the butcher shop she runs. As we walk toward the "House of Meats," her dogs are rugs in the dirt, flattened by the heat of the day. Not one of them barks at us to warn her. We step over them and get no more reaction than a whine, the slow beat of a tail. Inside, we get no answers either, although we call Aunt Mary up and down the hall. We enter the kitchen and sit at the table, which holds a half-ruined watermelon. By the sink, in a tin box, are cigarettes. My mother takes one and carefully puts a match to it, frowning. "I know what," she says. "Go check the lockers."

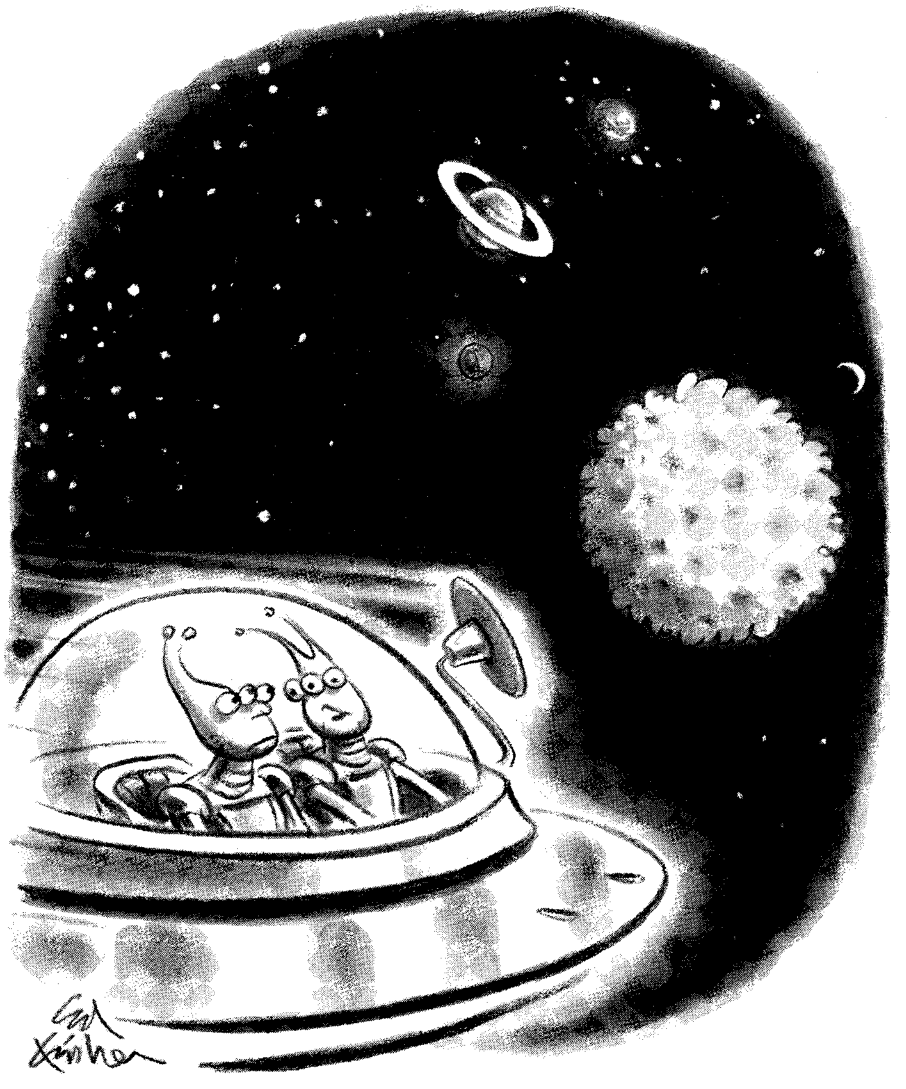
There are two—a big freezer full of labelled meats and rental space, and another, smaller one that is just a side cooler. I notice, walking past the meat display counter, that the red beacon beside the outside switch of the cooler is glowing. That tells you when the light is on inside.

I pull the long metal handle toward me and the thick door swishes open. I step into the cool, spicy air. Aunt Mary is there, too proud to ever register a hint of surprise. She simply nods and looks away as though I've just been out for a minute, although we've not seen one another in six months or more. She is relaxing on a big can of pepper labelled "Zanzibar," reading a scientific-magazine article. I sit down on a barrel of alum. With no warning, I drop my bomb: "I'm married." It doesn't matter how I tell it to Aunt Mary, because she won't be, refuses to be, surprised.

"What's he do?" she simply asks, putting aside the sheaf of paper. I thought the first thing she'd do was scold me for fooling my mother. But it's odd, for two women who have lived through boring times and disasters, how rarely one comes to the other's defense, and how often they are each willing to take advantage of the other's absence. But I'm benefitting here. It seems that Aunt Mary is truly interested in Gerry. So I'm honest.

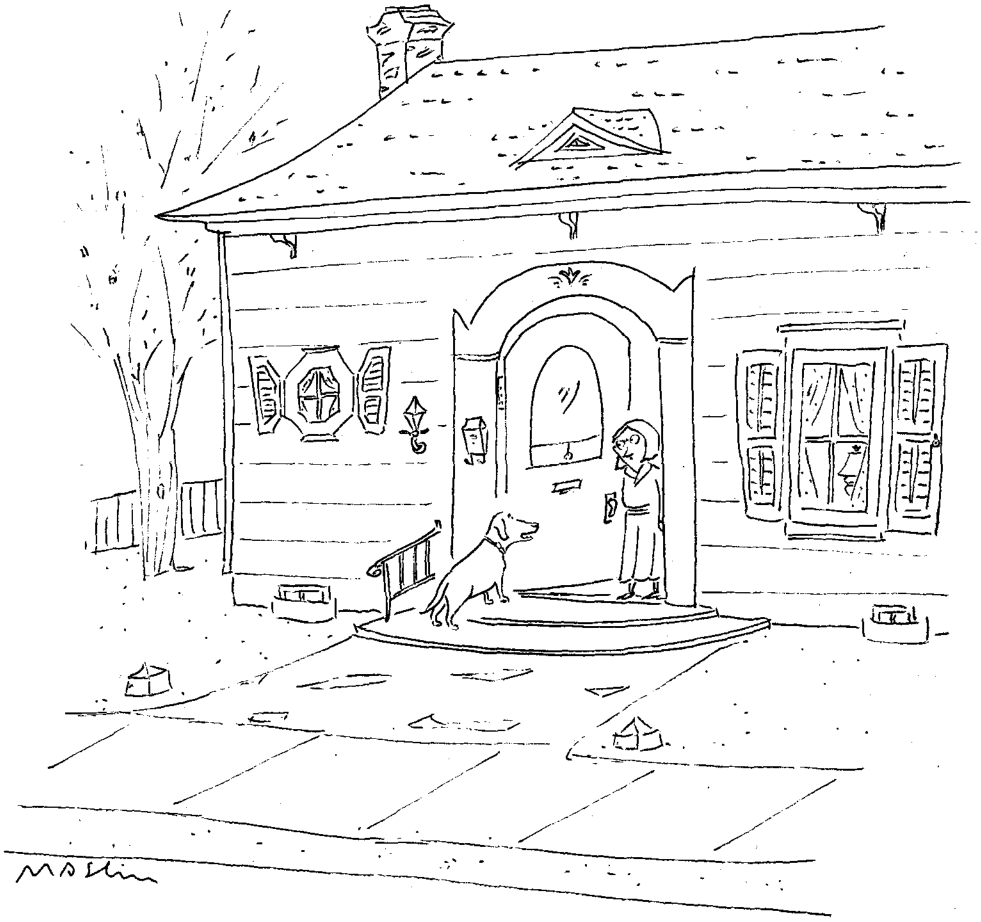
"He's something like a political activist. I mean he's been in jail and all. But not for any crime, you see; it's just because of his convictions."

She gives me a long, shrewd stare. Her skin is too tough to wrinkle, but she doesn't look young. All around us hang loops of sausages, every kind you can imagine, every color, from the purple-black of blutwurst to the pale-whitish links that my mother likes best. Blocks of butter and headcheese, a can of raw milk, wrapped parcels, and



"As far as we can make out, there's a small, heavy core, and then it's all polystyrene foam."

cured bacons are stuffed onto the shelves around us. My heart has gone still and cool inside me, and I can't stop talking.



"May I speak with the dog of the house?"

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"He's the kind of guy it's hard to describe. Very different. People call him a free spirit, but that doesn't say it either, because he's very disciplined in some ways. He learned to be neat in jail." I pause. She says nothing, so I go on. "I know it's sudden, but who likes weddings? I hate them—all that mess with the bridesmaids' gowns, getting material to match. I don't have girlfriends. I mean, how embarrassing, right? Who would sing 'O Perfect Love'? Carry the ring?"

She isn't really listening.

"What's he do?" she asks again.

Maybe she won't let go of it until I discover the right answer, like a game with nouns and synonyms.

"He—well, he agitates," I tell her.

"Is that some kind of factory work?"

"Not exactly, no, it's not a nine-to-five job or anything . . ."

She lets the magazine fall, now, cocks her head to one side, and stares at me without blinking her cold yellow eyes. She has the look of a hawk, of a person who can see into the future but won't tell you about it. She's lost business for staring at customers, but she doesn't care.

"Are you telling me that he doesn't . . ." Here she shakes her head twice, slowly, from one side to the other, without removing me from her stare. "That he doesn't have regular work?"

"Oh, what's the matter, anyway?" I say roughly. "I'll work. This is the nineteen-seventies."

She jumps to her feet, stands over me—a stocky woman with terse features and short, thin points of gray hair. Her earrings tremble and flash—small fiery opals. Her brown plastic glasses hang crooked on a cord around her neck. I have never seen her become quite so instantly furious, so disturbed. "We're going to fix that," she says.

The cooler immediately feels smaller, the sausages knock at my shoulder, and the harsh light makes me blink. I am as stubborn as Aunt Mary, however, and she knows that I can go head to head with her. "We're married and that's final." I manage to stamp my foot.

Aunt Mary throws an arm back, blows air through her cheeks, and waves away my statement vigorously. "You're a little girl. How old is *he*?"

I frown at my lap, trace the threads in my blue cotton skirt, and tell her that age is irrelevant.

"Big word," she says sarcastically. "Let me ask you this. He's old enough to get a job?"

"Of course he is; what do you think? O.K., he's older than me. He's in his thirties."

"Aha, I knew it."

"Geez! So what? I mean, haven't you ever been in love, hasn't someone ever gotten you *right here*?" I smash my fist on my chest.

We lock eyes, but she doesn't waste a second in feeling hurt. "Sure, sure I've been in love. You think I haven't? I know what it feels like, you smart-ass. You'd be surprised. But he was no lazy son of a bitch. Now, listen . . ." She stops, draws breath, and I let her. "Here's what I mean by 'fix.' I'll teach the sausage-making trade to him—to you, too—and the grocery business. I've about had it anyway, and so's your mother. We'll do the same as my aunt and uncle—leave the shop to you and move to Arizona. I like this place." She looks up at the burning safety bulb, down at me again. Her face drags in the light. "But what the hell. I always wanted to travel."

I'm stunned, a little flattened out, maybe ashamed of myself. "You hate going anywhere," I say, which is true.

The door swings open and Mom comes in with us. She finds a milk can and balances herself on it, sighing at the delicious feeling of the air, absorbing from the silence the fact that we have talked. She hasn't anything to add, I guess, and as the coolness hits, her eyes fall shut. Aunt Mary's, too. I can't help it, either, and my eyelids drop, although my brain is conscious and alert. From the darkness, I can see us in the brilliance. The light rains down on us. We sit the way we have been sitting, on our cans of milk and pepper, upright and still. Our hands are curled loosely in our laps. Our faces are blank as the gods'. We could be statues in a tomb sunk into the side of a mountain. We could be dreaming the world up in our brains.

IT is later, and the weather has no mercy. We are drained of everything but simple thoughts. It's too hot for feelings. Driving home, we see how field after field of beets has gone into shock, and even some of the soybeans. The plants splay, limp, burned into the ground. Only the sunflowers continue to struggle upright, bristling but small.

What drew me in the first place to Gerry was the unexpected. I went to hear him talk just after I enrolled at the university, and then I demonstrated *when they came and got him off* the stage. He always went so willingly, accommodating everyone. I began to visit him. I sold lunar calendars and posters to raise his bail and eventually free him. One thing led to another, and one night we found ourselves alone in a Howard Johnson's coffee shop downstairs from where they put him up when his speech was finished. There were much more beautiful women after him; he could have had his pick of Swedes or Yankton Sioux girls, who are the best-looking of all. But I was different, he says. He liked my slant on life. And then there was no going back once it started, no turning, as though it was meant. We had no choice.

I have this intuition as we near the house, in the fateful quality of light, as in the turn of the day the heat continues to press and the blackness, into which the warmth usually lifts, lowers steadily: We must come to the end of something; there must be a close to this day.

As we turn into the yard we see that Gerry is sitting on the porch stairs. Now it is our turn to be received. I throw the car door open and stumble out before the motor even cuts. I run to him and hold him, as my mother, pursuing the order of events, parks carefully. Then she walks over, too, holding her purse by the strap. She stands before him and says no word but simply looks into his face, staring as if he's cardboard, a man behind glass who cannot see her. I think she's rude, but then I realize that he is staring back, that they are the same height. Their eyes are level.

He puts his hand out. "My name is Gerry."

"Gerry what?"

"Nanapush."

She nods, shifts her weight. "You're from that line, the old strain, the ones . . ." She does not finish.

"And my father," Gerry says, "was Old Man Pillager."

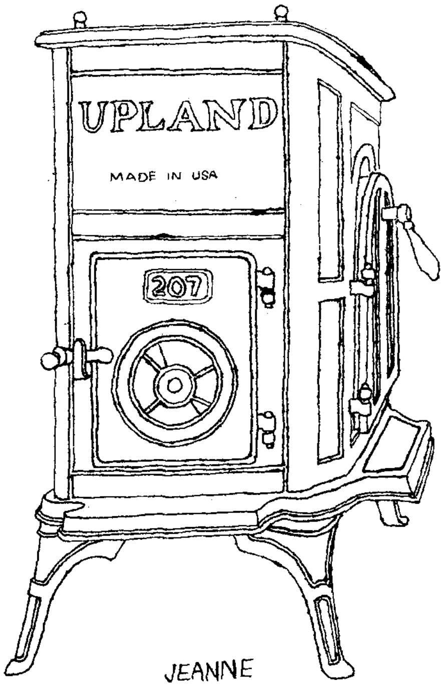
"Kashpaws," she says, "are my branch, of course. We're probably related through my mother's brother." They do not move. They are like two opponents from the same divided country, staring across the border. They do not shift or blink, and I see that they are more alike than I am like either one of them—so tall, solid, dark-haired. They could be mother and son.

"Well, I guess you should come in," she offers. "You are a distant relative, after all." She looks at me. "Distant enough."

Whole swarms of mosquitoes are whining down, discovering us now, so there is no question of staying where we are. And so we walk into the house, much hotter than outside, with the gathered heat. Instantly the sweat springs from our skin and I can think of nothing else but cooling off. I try to force the windows higher in their sashes, but there's no breeze anyway; nothing stirs, no air.

"Are you sure," I gasp, "about those fans?"

"Oh, they're broke, all right," my mother says, distressed. I rarely hear this in her voice. She switches on the lights, which makes the room seem hotter, and we lower ourselves into the easy chairs. Our words echo, as though the walls have baked and dried hollow.



"Show me those fans," says Gerry.

My mother points toward the kitchen. "They're sitting on the table. I've already tinkered with them. See what you can do."

And so he does. After a while she hoists herself and walks out back to him. Their voices close together now, absorbed, and their tools clank frantically, as if they are fighting a duel. But it is a race with the bell of darkness and their waning energy. I think of ice. I get ice on the brain.

"Be right back," I call out, taking the car keys from my mother's purse. "Do you need anything?"

There is no answer from the kitchen but a furious sputter of metal, the clatter of nuts and bolts spilling to the floor.

I DRIVE out to the Superpumper, a big new gas-station complex on the edge of town, where my mother most likely has never been. She doesn't know about convenience stores, has no credit cards for groceries or gas, pays only with small bills and change. She never has used an ice machine. It would grate on her that a bag of frozen water costs eighty cents, but it doesn't bother me. I take the plastic-foam cooler and I fill it for a couple of dollars. I buy two six-packs of Shasta soda and I plunge them in among the uniform coins of ice. I drink two myself on the way home, and I manage to lift the whole heavy cooler out of the trunk, carry it to the door.

The fans are whirring, beating the air. I hear them going in the living room the minute I come in. The only light shines from the kitchen. Gerry and my mother have thrown the pillows from the couch onto the living-room floor, and they are sitting in the rippling currents of air. I bring the cooler in and put it near us. I have chosen all dark flavors—black cherry, grape, red berry, cola—so as we drink the darkness swirls inside us with the night air, sweet and sharp, driven by small motors.

I drag more pillows down from the other rooms upstairs. There is no question of attempting the bedrooms, the stifling beds. And so, in the dark, I hold hands with Gerry as he settles down between my mother and me. He is huge as a hill between the two of us, solid in the beating wind.

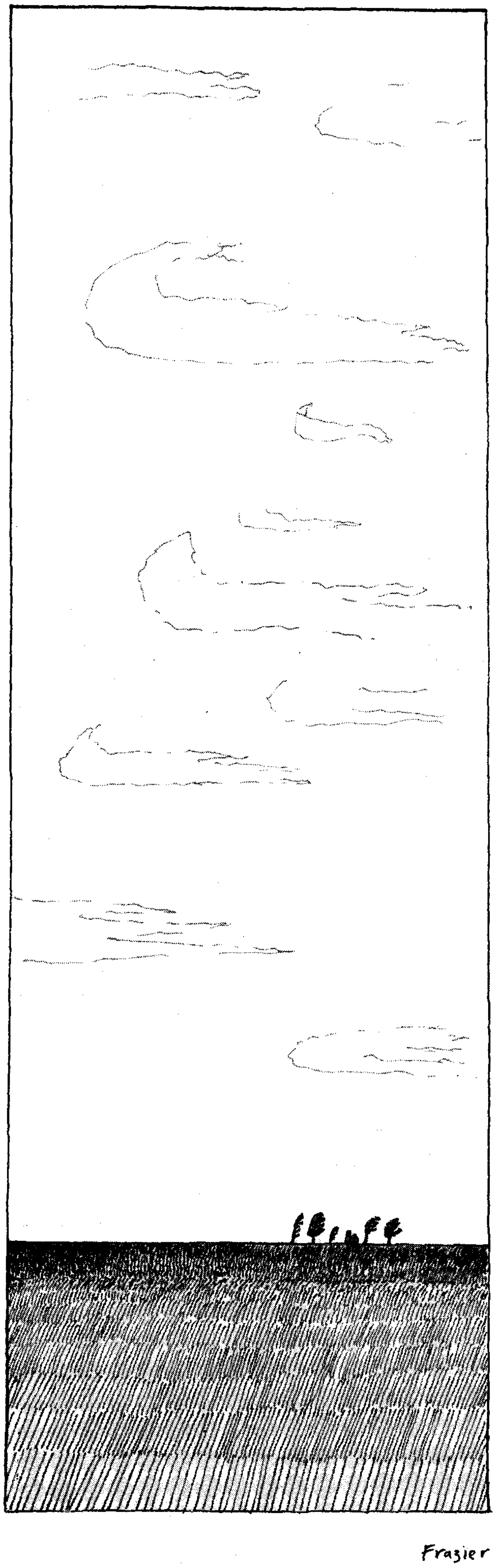
—LOUISE ERDRICH

A REPORTER AT LARGE

GREAT PLAINS—III

NICODEMUS, Kansas, is a town with a population of about fifty, in the western part of the state. Like many other towns on the Great Plains, Nicodemus was founded in the eighteen-seventies; unlike any other that still survives, it was founded by black homesteaders. In 1877, a small group of emigrants from Kentucky and Tennessee, including the families of Randall Smith, Lewis and Henry Williams, Sam Garland, Manuel Napew, and a Baptist minister named Silas Lee, arrived in Graham County, filed homestead claims, and laid out a town. They began too late in the season to break sod and put in crops, and they were short on draft animals, equipment, seeds, and money. Their first winter was hard. They lived in shelters dug into hillsides. Some of the men got jobs on the Kansas Pacific Railroad, thirty-five miles away. In the spring, with just three horses among them, they had to do a lot of cultivating and planting by hand. Emigrants continued to arrive, and the town grew. By 1880, it had a population of almost five hundred. By 1887, it had churches, stores, an academy, a band, and two newspapers, one called the *Western Cyclone*. A man from Nicodemus who became state auditor in 1883 was the first black to hold major office in Kansas.

The people who founded Nicodemus were part of a movement of tens of thousands of blacks who left the South in the late eighteen-seventies for new homes in the West. The movement started because many recently freed slaves were poor, mistreated by whites, and disappointed that freedom was so little of an improvement. In Southern states where Democrats had returned to power, blacks had just lost the vote. Some white Southerners opposed to Reconstruction were not convinced it should be a serious offense to shoot blacks; several of the West's famous white outlaws got their start that way. Benjamin (Pap) Singleton, a black carpenter from Nashville who helped so many to emigrate that he was sometimes called the Moses of the Colored Exodus, compared the white Southerners to "a muddy-faced bellowing bull." Singleton could not read or write, but he travelled all over distributing circulars (which the railroads and Western land companies were printing in volume at the time) about the halcyon new lands on the Great Plains. His Tennessee Real Estate and Homestead Association was one of several "colonization councils" that attracted members by the thousand. He helped to found black colonies in several Kansas counties, and by the end of 1878 had sent seven thousand four hundred and thirty-two people to the state. Black people all over the South became excited at the thought of this new promised land. In Vicksburg, a convention of cotton planters urged them to preserve "intact until completion, contracts for labor-leasing which have already been made."



Frazier

Because of the career in Kansas of the famed abolitionist John Brown, that state was especially attractive to black emigrants. At first, Governor John St. John made a speech welcoming the new arrivals. Then, possibly because of urging by S. J. Gilmore, the land commissioner for the Kansas Pacific Railroad, who said of the blacks, "Indications are that we will be overrun with them next year," Governor St. John began to discourage black immigration, and said that conditions in Kansas were not as promising as the blacks had been led to believe. The Kansas Pacific sent blacks who wanted to emigrate a form letter advis-

ORPHEUS ALONE

It was an adventure much could be made of: a walk
On the shores of the darkest known river,
Among the hooded, shoving crowds, by steaming rocks
And rows of ruined huts half buried in the muck;
Then to the great court with its marble yard
Whose emptiness gave him the creeps, and to sit there
In the sunken silence of the place and speak
Of what he had lost, what he still possessed of his loss,
And then, pulling out all the stops, describing her eyes,
Her forehead, where the golden light of evening spread,
The curve of her neck, the slope of her shoulders, everything
Down to her thighs and calves, letting the words come,
As if lifted from sleep, to drift upstream,
Against the water's will, where all the condemned
And pointless labor, stunned by his voice's cadence,
Would come to a halt, and even the crazed, dishevelled
Furies, for the first time, would weep, and the soot-filled
Air would clear just enough for her, the lost bride,
To step through the image of herself and be seen in the light.
As everyone knows, this was the first great poem,
Which was followed by days of sitting around
In the houses of friends, with his head back, his eyes
Closed, trying to will her return, but finding
Only himself, again and again, trapped
In the chill of his loss, and, finally,
Without a word, taking off to wander the hills
Outside of town, where he stayed until he had shaken
The image of love and put in its place the world

• •

ing them that all the good lands were taken, that no laborers were needed, that the weather was chancy for farming, and that each family should bring five hundred dollars in cash. It was probably the only time in history that a railroad ever told the truth of the situation to a prospective settler.

But the effect of railroad propaganda was not easy to undo, and advertising circulars continued to spread by way of Pullman porters, itinerant preachers, and steamboat employees. The blacks who decided to emigrate soon acquired the name Exodusters. Their exodus had its own songs, like "The Land That Gives Birth to Freedom":

We have held meetings to ourselves
To see if we can't plan some way to live.
(Chorus)
Marching along, yes, we are marching along,
To Kansas City we are bound.

The movement reached a flood in 1879, when between fifteen and twenty thousand blacks arrived in Kansas within a four-month period. They built shantytowns on the outskirts of Leavenworth, Topeka, Atchison, and Kansas City. Their towns had names like Rattlebone Hollow, Juniper Town, and Wyandotte City. Atchison passed an ordinance against the importation of paupers. Leavenworth refused to allow steamboats carrying blacks to land. Many blacks died in the shantytowns; in Wyandotte City, in the spring of 1879, they were said to be dying at a rate of fifty a day. Back East, Freedmen's Relief Associations were set up to help them. Blacks still planning to come heard unhappy reports from those who had preceded them, and the exodus, which by then had brought perhaps forty thousand to the West, suddenly stopped. Soon two-thirds of the black immigrants had left the state. The black farming colonies eventually died out. Today, on the Great Plains, Nicodemus is the only artifact of the black exodus that remains.

I first learned of Nicodemus at the Fick Fossil and History Museum, in Oakley, Kansas. This museum has a good collection—a pterodactyl wing, claws and all; sea lilies, in bas-relief; a fifteen-foot-long buck-toothed prehistoric fish called Portheus Molossus; a plesiosaurus fin with bite marks on it—from the world-famous fossil beds nearby. Mr. and Mrs. Earnest Fick, who gave the money for the museum, found thousands of prehistoric shark teeth around their ranch, and Mrs. Fick used the teeth to make oil-painting collages. The museum has many of her shark-teeth art works on display, as well as a display of telegraph- and telephone-pole insulators, with names like Double Petticoat, Green Milk Glass Beehive, Pilgrim Hat, Roman Helmet, Baby Signal, and Bavarian China Telephone, and a display about four emigrant girls who were captured by Cheyenne Indians, and a wagon, and an old-time telegraph office, and a photograph of a local man who was once first in the state fair in Grooming, and a display of photographs of disasters in the area, including the blizzard of 1912, the hailstorm of 1923, the floods over the Tux Smith bridge in 1951, the Page City grain-elevator "bulging" in 1956, and the last Union Pacific passenger train to Oakley, in 1971. The display that mentioned Nicodemus told a little of the history of the town, with photographs. The history ended, "Today, the once-prosperous town of Nicodemus is no more."

Because I am interested in ruins, I decided to drive over to the townsite. Nicodemus is eighty-two miles from Oakley; surprisingly, Rand McNally still showed it on the map. When I reached the place where I had expected to find just a few foundations by the roadside, I found instead a living town: houses, streets, gardens, a township hall, a Baptist church, a baseball field, and a barbecue place called Ernestine's. Cars, many with out-of-state plates, were parked all over. At Ernestine's, you ordered through a side door and sat at a picnic table outside. I had a sagging paper plate of ribs, coleslaw, and white bread, and a Dr Pepper. At the next table, a large white man wearing overalls and barbecue sauce to the eyebrows told me that Nicodemus was in the middle of its annual Founders' Day Weekend celebration, that he and his wife were from the nearby town of Bogue, that people had come from all over the country, and that tomorrow was the parade. His name was Buzz Mauck. He said he would take me to meet a man named Alvin Bates, who had lived in Nicodemus all his life and

As he wished it would be, urging its shape and measure
Into speech of such newness that the world was swayed,
And trees suddenly appeared in the bare place
Where he spoke and lifted their limbs and swept
The tender grass with the gowns of their shade,
And stones, weightless for once, came and set themselves there,
And small animals lay in the miraculous fields of grain
And aisles of corn, and slept. The voice of light
Had come forth from the body of fire, and each thing
Rose from its depths and shone as it never had.
And that was the second great poem,
Which no one recalls anymore. The third and greatest
Came into the world as the world, out of the unsayable,
Invisible source of all longing to be, it came
As things come that will perish, to be seen or heard
Awhile, like the coating of frost or the movement
Of wind, and then no more; it came in the middle of sleep
Like a door to the infinite, and, circled by flame,
Came again at the moment of waking, and sometimes,
Remote and small, it came as a vision with trees
By a weaving stream, brushing the bank
With their violet shade, with somebody's limbs
Scattered among the matted, mildewed leaves nearby,
With his severed head rolling under the waves,
Breaking the shifting columns of light into a swirl
Of slivers and flecks; it came in a language
Untouched by pity, in a poem, lavish and dark,
Where death is reborn and sent into the world as a gift,
So the future, with no voice of its own, or hope
Of ever becoming more than it will be, might mourn.

—MARK STRAND

• •

could tell me anything I wanted to know. I got in the back seat of the Maucks' older-model Oldsmobile and rode along bouncy streets and into the driveway of a small one-story house, where Buzz Mauck rolled down his window and yelled, "Alvin!"

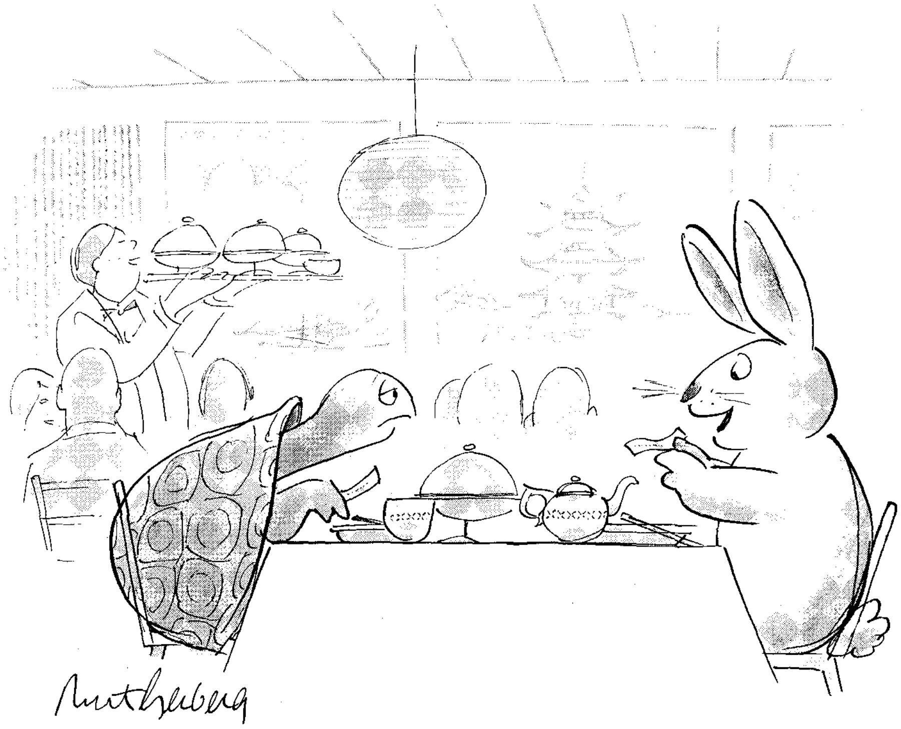
A short, light-brown man came out and walked up to the car and said, "Hello, Mr. Mauck, how are you doin'?"

"Mr. Mauck! Shoot, I'm Buzz to you," Buzz Mauck said. Then he said, "Alvin, I've got a man here who wants to talk to you about Nicodemus." Turning to me, he said, "Go ahead." I got out and talked while Alvin Bates kept his eyes at shoulder level and agreed politely with the questions I asked. After a few minutes, I got back in the car and Buzz Mauck drove me back to my van.

You don't see many black people on the Great Plains. In the nineteenth century, there were a lot of black or part-black plainsmen, like Jim Beckwourth, the fur trapper and trader, who lived for many years with the Crow Indians, or Desirée, the Missouri River pilot who once took an American Fur Company keelboat from Fort Union to St. Louis by himself, or Britt Johnson, the teamster who rode alone hundreds of miles beyond the frontier to retrieve his wife and two children captured by Kiowa Indians, or Isaiah (Teat) Dorman, the interpreter for the 7th Cavalry, who was killed at the Little Bighorn, or the 4th Cavalry, the all-black brigade that finally ran down and defeated the most elusive of the Comanche bands, or Isom Dart, the famous horse thief and rustler who was killed by the hired gunman Tom Horn, or Bose Ikard, the bronc buster and all-around cowboy who took some of the first trail herds north out of Texas, or Bill Pickett, the rodeo cowboy who used to throw steers off their feet by biting their front lips and falling to the ground. Today, once you get north of Oklahoma you almost never see a black face at all.

When I returned to Nicodemus the next morning, even more cars—from Denver, Topeka, Wichita, Los Angeles, San Jose, St. Louis, Baltimore—were parked in driveways and on lawns. Everything was quiet. By mid-morning, people from nearby towns were at the rest area on Highway 24, unloading horses and hitching them to wagons for the parade. Along the main street, people began to bring lawn chairs from their houses and set them up. For a while, being there felt like horning in on a family reunion. Then the crowd started to grow. Local white people and black people called out greetings to one another with the distant heartiness of ship captains hailing. A guy in khaki shorts was carrying a video camera. At one o'clock, the parade began. It was like a parade in someone's living room. Its front was followed closely by its back. There was applause. Then people stood around. Kids were chasing each other and playing. Mothers stood above kids in strollers who were not listening and talked about them. I ate a hot dog and drank some lemonade with six sisters named McGhee, from Wichita. Soon everybody went into the township hall to see a program. Admission was a dollar for adults and fifty cents for children. People sat on chairs against the walls, leaving the floor in the middle open. Many stood at the near wall, around the door. I was next to the biggest of the McGhee sisters, who said she was the manager of a supermarket. We discussed her store's check-cashing policies. The crowd was more black than white. In front of me, a white rancher with a creased neck and a straw Stetson hitched up his jeans and sat on his heels. In the center of the floor, a seven-year-old girl and a twelve-year-old girl began a dance that looked impromptu. "What I want to see is some of this here break dancing," the rancher said to a girl beside him.

Next came a fashion show of ladies' hats designed by Billie Singleton, of Topeka. The hats were big, in dramatic shapes, burgundy and gray and black and white. Mrs. Avalon Roberson modelled them. She put on each hat and strolled around the room so everybody could see it. She got applause all the way around. Then Mrs. Juanita Robinson, of Nicodemus, introduced her daughters Kathleen, Karen, Kaye, Kolleen, Krystal, and Karmen. Her other daughter, Kimberleen, who was pregnant, watched from the audience. First, Karmen, wearing (Mrs. Robinson told us) a white suit with a slit skirt, a navy handkerchief, a black-



“‘*Slow and steady wins the race.’ What’s* yours *say?*”

• •

and-white blouse, white ankle boots with a chain on the side, and a black-and-white hat with a veil, walked to the middle of the floor and stood with her left hand on her hip and her face turned to the side. Then Krystal, wearing a white lace dress, a white lace coat with balloon sleeves, and a white hat with navy lining and a veil, came and stood next to her sister the same way. Then came Kolleen, in a casual dress with black-and-off-white striped pockets on the side, white nylons, black shoes, and a black hat. Then Karen, in a two-piece red suit, a white lace blouse, a red hat with a veil, and white shoes. Then Kathleen, in a purple silk dress with black stripes, a black hat, and black shoes. Then Kaye, in a black-and-blue-triangle dress, a black belt, black shoes, blue nylons, and a black hat. When they were all lined up, they held that pose for a moment. Then the song “When Doves Cry,” by Prince, began to play on the loudspeaker, and they began to dance. I looked past the people sitting on chairs against the wall, the women with their pocketbooks on their knees, past the portrait of Blanche White, who was like a mother to the kids in the town, through the tall open window, past the roadside grove of elms that Blanche White’s 4-H club planted in the nineteen-fifties, past the wheat-field horizon, and into the blank, bright sky. Suddenly I felt a joy so strong it almost knocked me down. It came up my spine and settled on my head like a warm cap and filled my eyes with tears, while I stood there packed in with everybody, watching Mrs. Robinson’s lovely daughters dance.

And I thought, *It could have worked!* This democracy, this land of freedom and equality and the pursuit of happiness—it could have worked! There was something to it, after all! It didn’t have to turn into a greedy free-for-all! We didn’t have to make a mess of it and the continent and ourselves! It could have worked! The Robinson sisters danced; Prince sang about doves crying; beauty and courage and curiosity and gentleness seemed not to be rare aberrations in the world. Nicodemus, a town with reasons enough to hold a grudge, a town with plenty of reasons not to exist at all, celebrated its Founders’ Day with a show of hats and a dance revue. The Robinson sisters wove between one another, three by three. People cheered and whistled. The rancher who had wanted to see some break dancing clapped. To me, and maybe to some others in the room, the sight of so many black people here on the blue-eyed Great Plains was like a cool drink of water. Just the way they walked was something different and exciting. For a few moments, I could imagine the past rewritten, wars unfought, the buffalo and the Indians undestroyed, the prairie unplundered. Maybe history did not absolutely have to turn out the way it did. Maybe the history of the West, for example, could have involved more admiration of hats, more unarmed get-togethers, more dancing, more tasting of spareribs.

Joy! I leaned against the sturdiness of the McGhee sister by my side. From the wood floor came a dust that smelled like small towns. Thoughts that usually shout down joy in me were nowhere in sight. I read in some magazine once that the most important word in American movies is “home”; that Americans, being immigrants, have strong associations with that word. The Robinson sisters turned and did a move that was mostly from the knees down. I was in the middle of America, in the middle of the Great Plains, in the midst of history, in the valley of the Solomon River, in the town of Nicodemus: in my mind, anyway, home. “Home on the Range,” a song whose first verse (“Oh, give me a home . . .”) is familiar to millions, has a less familiar second verse, which goes:

Oh, give me the gale of the Solomon vale,
Where life streams with buoyancy flow,
Or the banks of the Beaver,
Where seldom if ever
Any poisonous herbage doth grow.

All around me I observed an almost total lack of poisonous herbage. The life streams were flowing with buoyancy. I was no longer a consumer, a ratepayer, a tenant, a cardholder, a motorist. I was home. The world looked as I wanted it to. My every breath was justified. I felt not the mild warmth of irony, not the comfort of camp, not the cheer of success and a full bank account; just plain, complete joy.

What a humming engine this feeling was! Joy like this is so rare in me as to be endangered. Did people use to feel like this all the time? Was this what those old-timers were looking for, and finding, on the Great Plains? Certainly no man was ever happier than the first plains Indian to ride a horse, when time and space changed in an instant, and two feet were replaced by four, and a ridge that used to be a long, hot walk away was suddenly as near as a thought, a little leaning forward, and a tap of heel to flank. How it felt riding uphill, and how it felt leaning

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Michael S. Dukakis, Governor

back over the haunches going downhill, and then the smooth feeling on the straightaway when the trot stretched into a gallop! Instead of seeing the upraised tails of the back ends of disappearing buffalo, the Indian was suddenly part of the herd itself, observing what they looked like when they ran, picking the ones he wanted to eat, driving his arrows all the way through them into the ground, then walking his horse back over miles to see how many he'd got. Wrapped in a buffalo robe at night, he must have had a physical memory in his whole body of the horse moving beneath him. The Miniconjou Sioux John Fire Lame Deer, in his book "Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions," says, "For bringing us the horse we could almost forgive you for bringing us whiskey."

And how great the fur trappers must have felt, sometimes, seeing this land when it was still completely wild! A trapper with a good gun and two mules and a partner to share the watch at night was liable to leave the settlements for the West and never come back. Trappers who weren't killed were changed so that they never wanted to sleep in a house again. Kit Carson went West when he was seventeen, and travelled enough of the wilderness to earn him an airline mileage bonus today. Jim Bridger, sometimes called the King of the Mountain Men, first crossed the plains at eighteen, did not return to the settlements until he was thirty-five, stayed a short while, and then went back. He told people that not once during those seventeen years had he tasted white bread. And how much fun the cowboys must have had, mixed in with the pain of their job! They were America's first continental citizens, seeing south Texas and Canada in a single season, carrying everything they needed with them on their saddles, stopping in towns with nicknames like the Gomorrah of the Cattle Trail (Ogallala, Nebraska), Hell on Wheels (Sherman, Wyoming, among others), and the Holy City of the Cow (Cheyenne, Wyoming). How pleasant to dance at the Cottage Saloon in Miles City, Montana, with Connie, the Cowboy Queen, who wore a two-hundred-and-fifty-dollar dress embroidered with the brand of every cattle outfit between the Yellowstone and the Platte! And imagine the time the early railroad passengers had, shooting buffalo from the windows of the moving train, filling the compartment with smoke, shouting, laughing, then retiring to the saloon car! And how on-top-of-the-world it must have felt to be a town builder, sitting in a wagon above a cottonwood-lined river valley and seeing the promised land!

Probably the happiest man ever to ride the plains was also probably the most famous. Elizabeth Custer, wife of General George A. Custer, in her book "Boots and Saddles," said, "My husband used to tell me that he believed he was the happiest man on earth, and I cannot help thinking that he was." Custer graduated last in his class from West Point in 1861, was jailed there after graduation for neglect of duty as Officer of the Guard, was released through the intercession of his classmates, fought many battles in the Civil War, became the youngest major general in the history of the Army by the end of the war, was appointed to the 7th Cavalry, fought several engagements with Indians on the plains, was court-martialled and suspended from duty for a year for ordering the shooting of deserters while on a forced march across Kansas primarily to see his wife, was reinstated after ten months through the intercession of General Sheridan, led an Army expedition to the Black Hills (in violation of a treaty with the Indians) in 1874, discovered gold, told the newspapers, started a gold rush, was removed from command for making unsubstantiated allegations of corruption against President Grant's brother before Congress, pleaded on his knees before General Terry to be allowed to serve in the Indian war that had followed the gold rush, was reinstated through the intercession of Generals Sheridan, Sherman, and Terry, led the 7th Cavalry in pursuit of Indians in the summer of 1876, continued the pursuit past where his orders said to stop, discovered a village on the Little Bighorn River in southwestern Montana, attacked the village, and died, with about two hundred and sixty-five of his command, at the hands of thousands of Sioux, Cheyenne, and other warriors. The event was the crescendo of a century of history on the Great Plains. Among the millions of words circling invisibly above the granite memorial on the low ridge where the bodies of Custer and some of his men were found is an account of Custer's death that Sitting Bull gave to a newspaper reporter. "He killed a man when he fell. He laughed," Sitting Bull said. Although Sitting Bull did not see that himself, I like to believe it. I like to believe Custer even had fun dying.

At West Point, Custer entertained his classmates with comical mistranslations of French assignments and silent pantomimes in his pew during chapel. All his life, he enjoyed heedless and extreme practical jokes. Whenever he received orders to move, he celebrated with "wild demonstrations of joy," smashing chairs and whirling his wife around the room. She thought he was a riot; once, when she was with guests in the parlor and he wanted her to come to him in his study, he made her laugh uproariously with a note that read, "Do you think I am a confirmed monk?" The Great Plains, which he called "the fairest and richest portion of the national domain," were his playground. In the field, he sometimes travelled with his own cook, a cast-iron cookstove, a sixteen-piece Army band, and a pack of staghounds—one named Lucy Stone, after the woman-suffrage leader. Whenever buffalo crossed the line of march, Custer was likely to forget everything and take off after them. During one such chase, he accidentally shot his horse through the head, leaving himself stranded and alone in hostile territory miles from his command.

In his only book, "My Life on the Plains," which is mostly about the plains Indian campaigns of 1867-68, he tells of finding the bodies of twelve men who had been caught by hundreds of Sioux. As it happened, these men, led by Lieutenant Lyman Kidder, had been looking for him. They were a special detail sent by General Sherman with orders for Custer, who was wandering as usual at his own inspiration far from where he was supposed to be. The fate of these men caused him no guilt; rather, as he followed the trail they had left trying to escape, he thought, "How painfully, almost despairingly exciting must have been this ride for life!" The bodies were so mangled as to be unrecognizable, shot with “twenty to fifty” arrows each, limbs hacked, genitals cut off and stuffed into mouths, eyes cut out and laid nearby on rocks, etc. “How painfully, almost despairingly exciting . . . !”

Custer’s life demonstrates the power of a person having fun. Why, for example, were his superiors never able to restrain him successfully, or to keep this repeat offender away from important command? Maybe because they secretly looked up to him; maybe because a career of cavalry charges and danger and glory was something they had dreamed about as boys; maybe because he more closely resembled the soldier they had dreamed of being than they now did. Or maybe they simply loved him—Custer was good at being loved. The congressman who appointed him to West Point remembered him as “beautiful as Absalom with his yellow curls.” Several now forgotten Army officers did a better job fighting Indians on the plains, but Custer’s fame is the victory of fun and myth over complicated history. Pursuing his boy’s dream of a life on the Great Plains, a land that was itself a dream in many people’s minds, Custer finally ran into the largest off-reservation gathering of Indians ever in one place on the continent, and gave them what was possibly the last really good time they ever had.

Later, the Indians said that their encampment along the Little Bighorn stretched for miles, that they knew the soldiers were coming after them that summer, that Sitting Bull had foreseen the victory days in advance with a vision of “soldiers without ears falling upside-down into camp,” that the first attack came at the southern end of the camp, that they chased the soldiers there into defensive positions on a ridge, that they then saw flags coming over a hill to the east of camp, that Custer and more soldiers came pouring over the hill, that Crazy Horse said, “That’s where the big fight is going to be,” that Crazy Horse led the first charge against Custer, that the soldiers dismounted and retired back up the rise in good order, that some soldiers held the horses while others shot, that the Indians tried to kill the horse holders first, that soon the dust and smoke made it difficult to see, that eagle-bone whistles were shrieking, that warriors on horseback flew through the dust like shadows, that Indians shot and sometimes even scalped other Indians in the confusion, that the battle “looked like thousands of dogs might look if all of them were mixed together in a fight,” that the Indians so outnumbered the soldiers they could have killed them with their horses’ hooves, that the soldiers were covered with white dust, that many soldiers were killed with hatchets and stone clubs, that the fight lasted “about as long as it takes for a hungry man to eat his dinner.” Myth adhered to every Indian who was there. Well into this century, warriors who had fought Custer were famous on their reservations. (After the First World War, some were reluctant to admit Indian veterans to their warrior societies, on the ground that that war was “just shooting.”) Indians recounted the Little Bighorn in songs, stories, drawings, paintings, and interviews with white reporters. The way people never forget where they were when President Kennedy was shot, Indians remembered what they were doing—eating, minding the pony herd, visiting a friend, greasing for a swim

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INDULGENT. THE SENSE...

in the river—on the morning when the 7th Cavalry attacked. A man named Iron Hawk said that as he prepared for battle he was shaking so much and the pony he was holding was jerking so much that it took him a long time to braid an eagle feather into his hair. A woman named Mrs. Spotted Horn Bull (her husband was later to die with Sitting Bull) was in the hills digging turnips with many other women from the camp that morning; a mural-size canvas tipi liner that she later painted of the event shows her and her digging stick and the turnips at the top of the picture, and the battle below. The Sioux holy man Black Elk, who was thirteen at the time, said that as he walked among the dead soldiers the smell of blood made him sick, but "I was not sorry at all. I was a happy boy." A warrior named White Bull told an interviewer, "It was a glorious battle, I enjoyed it."

A PERSON can be amazingly happy on the Great Plains. Friends have told me the joy they felt, say, driving from Sheridan, Wyoming, to Hardin, Montana, or buying a turkey from a Hutterite religious colony near the Canadian border, or watching TV on New Year's Eve in the Trail Dust Motel, in Matador, Texas. So I know the way I felt in Nicodemus watching the Robinson sisters dance wasn't just me. Joy seems to be a product of the geography, just as deserts can produce mystical ecstasy and English moors produce gloom. Once happiness gets rolling in this open place, not much stops it. And if the Great Plains are like that today, what must they have been like in the nineteenth century, when man didn't have to share the stage with laws or institutions or machines? The Great Plains provided an obligingly blank backdrop for Custer, for the Sioux, for gamblers and buffalo hunters and river pilots and outlaws and trappers and cowboys. People pursued happiness here so fiercely that sometimes they touched it just as it was disappearing; and when their "real" lives were over—when Custer was dead, the Indians subdued, the open range fenced, the easy money gone—Great Plains adventures became theatre. Only a few years after Little Bighorn, Buffalo Bill Cody, the former Army scout better known as an impresario, hired some of the same Indians who had fought Custer to reenact the battle in his travelling Wild West shows. In arenas all over Europe and America, Custer died thousands of times more. The Wild West shows also featured cowboy gunfights, trick shooting and roping and riding, stagecoach robberies, buffalo, bucking horses. Old-time plainsmen who would never have "real" fun again were paid to have pretend fun.

Wild West shows toured until the nineteen-fifties, but by then they had competition from rodeos, cowboy-and-Indian movies, and Westerns on radio and television. When I was a kid, all boys and some girls knew who their favorite cowboy was—usually Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, or Hopalong Cassidy. In the late nineteen-fifties, there were thirty Western series on prime-time television. Nobody makes Westerns for series TV anymore, and Western movies are rare. Like the plains themselves, the genre has been mostly forgotten or abandoned. Western movies are box-office death, supposedly. The dust that choked the Custer battlefield would tend to rule out any movie on the subject at Walt Disney studios, which, according to *Premiere* magazine, has four guidelines for screenplays: no snow (winter scenes are out), no headlines (recent news stories are out), no rural (the action must take place in an urban area), and no dust (Westerns are out).

ONCE, the whole country faced west. For Thomas Jefferson, exploring the western part of the continent had the same fascination that exploring space had for later Presidents. When Jefferson designed his house, Monticello, he gave it a long porch and terrace from which he could view the western horizon. In 1803, he sent an expedition headed by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to explore the enormous tract of trans-Mississippi wilderness recently acquired from France in the Louisiana Purchase. The expedition was to follow the Missouri to its source, look for easy water routes across the continent, continue to the Pacific, and return. Particularly on the high plains, Lewis and Clark camped at places where nothing as important has happened since. On some of the bleaker reaches of the upper Missouri, they were the harbingers not of civilization but of future visits by Lewis-and-Clark buffs. Today, the names they gave to geograph-

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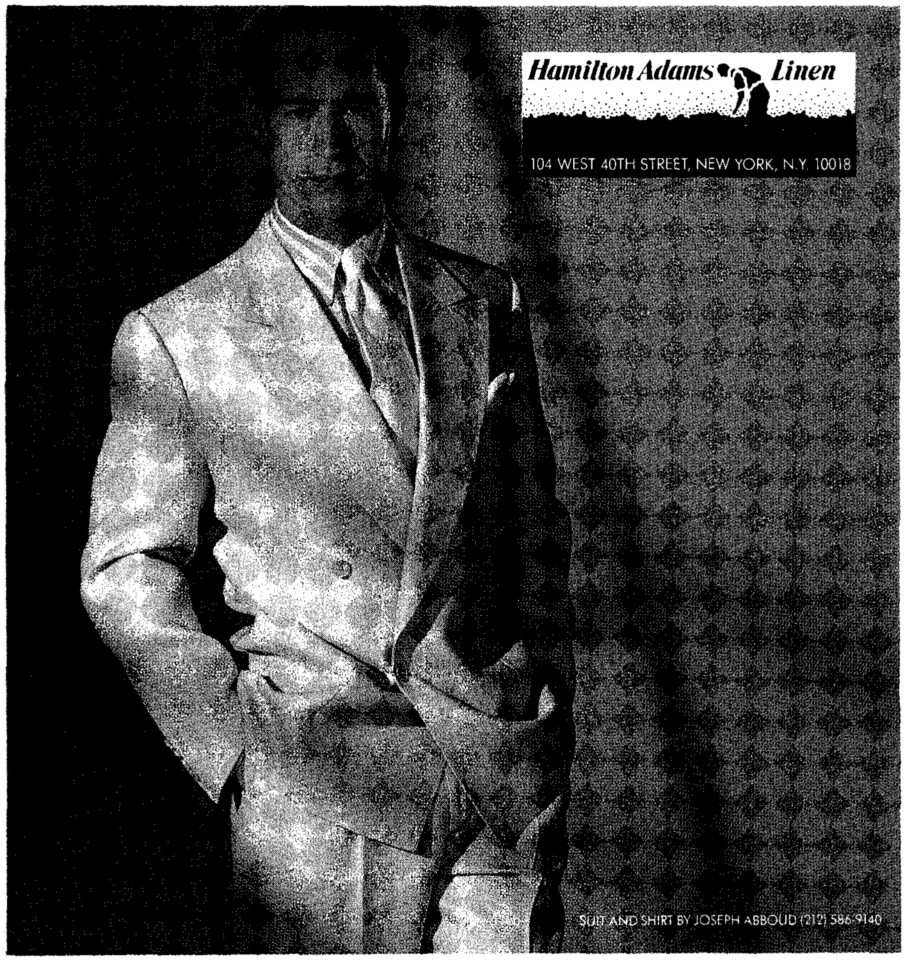

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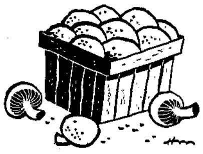
ic features commemorate themselves, their sweethearts, enlisted men with the expedition, Clark's slave, the President, Sacajawea's baby son, and several otherwise forgotten members of the Jefferson Administration.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition was actually Jefferson's third try at sending explorers to the American West. His second try was a decade earlier, when, as Secretary of State, he wanted to send a party headed by the French botanist André Michaux. Michaux got as far as Kentucky before President Washington had him recalled for his part in a French scheme to get America to declare war on Spain. Jefferson's first try was in 1785, when he was living in Paris as United States Ambassador. There he met a man named John Ledyard, who was, as Jefferson said, "of a roaming disposition." Ledyard was born in Groton, Connecticut, in 1751. He had failed to finish at Dartmouth because he was always off in the woods exploring, and he had sailed with Captain James Cook, in 1776, on one of his voyages of discovery to the Pacific. Ledyard was obsessed with the idea of crossing the North American continent. In Paris, he and Jefferson came up with a plan for Ledyard to explore the West by heading east; that is, Ledyard would go from Paris across Europe, across Russia, across the Pacific in a Russian ship, down the west coast of North America to the latitude of the Missouri, and down that river to the Mississippi and the United States.

Jefferson loved this idea, but first he had to get Ledyard a passport from the Empress Catherine to travel in Russia. Jefferson sent his request by way of diplomats he knew who knew her, and she took months to respond. When she did, she said, "Everything that has been written about this expedition is completely false and a chimerical dream." Jefferson decided to wait and ask again. Meanwhile, Ledyard became so impatient that he went to London and got passage on a ship sailing to the American Northwest. Before setting out, he bought "two great Dogs, an Indian pipe, and a hatchet" for the journey. Soon after the ship left the harbor, it was overtaken by a customs boat and forced to return because of unpaid debts.

To Jefferson's later request, Catherine replied to his go-between, the Baron von Grimm, of Saxe-Gotha, "I have told you all I had to say about Mr. Ledyard." In London, Ledyard finally decided he was going anyway, although by then winter was coming on. He raised money with the help of an English nobleman and an American diplomat, sailed to Ostend, travelled to Hamburg, Copenhagen, and Stockholm. On the way, he lost one of his dogs. From Stockholm he had intended to go by sled across the frozen Baltic Sea to Finland. Unfortunately, that winter was warm, and the Baltic froze only enough to prevent ships from sailing. So, rather than wait a few months for the Baltic to become navigable, Ledyard walked around it. In the middle of winter, he went up one side of the Gulf of Bothnia, down the other, across Finland, and over to St. Petersburg. The northernmost part of the trip took him almost to the Arctic Circle. In all, it was a walk of about twelve hundred miles. He arrived in St. Petersburg in March of 1787.



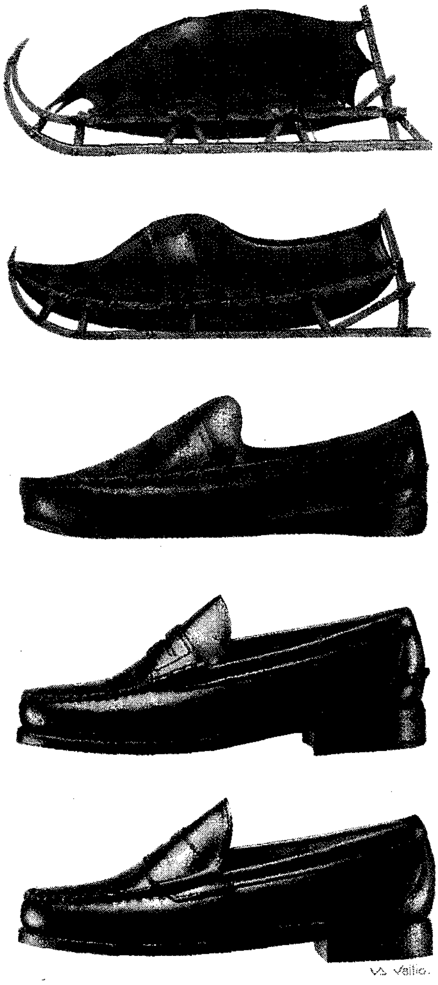
Still in need of a passport to cross Russia, he somehow managed to get one after a few months, with the help of a Russian Army officer who was a favorite of the Grand Duke Paul, who did not like Catherine. From St. Petersburg, Ledyard went on to Moscow, followed the Volga River to Kazan, crossed the Ural Mountains, and continued, in various conveyances, to Tobolsk, Omsk, Tomsk, and Irkutsk. By then, he was about three thousand miles from St. Petersburg. From Irkutsk he went two hundred miles to Kachuga, on the Lena River, and floated fifteen hundred miles down it to Yakutsk. There a local Army commandant ordered him to wait until spring to continue to the Pacific, still five hundred miles or so away.

What happened next, apparently, was that Catherine found out that Ledyard had gone ahead with his trip despite her refusals, and she hit the ceiling. Soldiers came after him, found him in Irkutsk, to which he had returned for some reason, arrested him, put him in a carriage with "his linen quite wet from the wash-tub" (in the words of an Englishman who was there), and drove him all the way back to Moscow. According to Jefferson, Ledyard "was put into a close carriage, and conveyed day and night, without ever stopping, till they reached Poland," but it is hard to believe that this is literally true. In any event, Ledyard's captors must have made good time over the four thousand-odd miles; Ledyard later wrote his cousin, "This journey was performed in 6 weeks: cruelties and hardships are tales I leave untold." In Moscow, authorities held an inquisition to find out if he was a spy. Then he was taken to the Polish border, told never to come back to Russia, and released.

The experience almost ruined his health, which he partly regained in Poland in the care of some Jewish women, who may have found him crying by the side of the road. Then, before the year was out, Ledyard went to Egypt to get a caravan together to explore the interior of Africa. On the day he had planned to leave Cairo on the journey, some people who were to take him up the Nile decided to wait because the winds were wrong. The delay made Ledyard so upset that he became sick to his stomach. For relief, he took an emetic, which caused him to vomit so violently that he burst a blood vessel and died. He was buried in the sand. As Jefferson later wrote, "thus failed the first attempt to explore the western part of our Northern continent."

That Catherine the Great should obstruct John Ledyard on his way to explore the region of the Great Plains is appropriate, because the Great Plains are linked more closely to Russia than to any other country. Among the Soviet Union's eight million six hundred and fifty thousand square miles are many that resemble the Great Plains in latitude, treelessness, and rainfall. The steppes of southern Russia—a six- or seven-hundred-mile-wide belt of prairie stretching east from Hungary for thirty-five hundred miles or more—are colder than the southern plains and drier than the northern. They are at least as windy and empty. On a map of the Soviet Union, town names thin out to the east of the lower Volga River, just as they do in America west of the Missouri. Both the plains and the steppes are ruled by continental weather systems, with similar extremes of temperature, and similar thunderstorms interrupting months of blue skies. The fine windblown loess soil of the Great Plains is like the *chernozem*, or "black earth," of the steppes. Many of the same plants flourish there as here. In fact, some of the most success-

According to the laws of evolution, only perfectly adapted species will survive.



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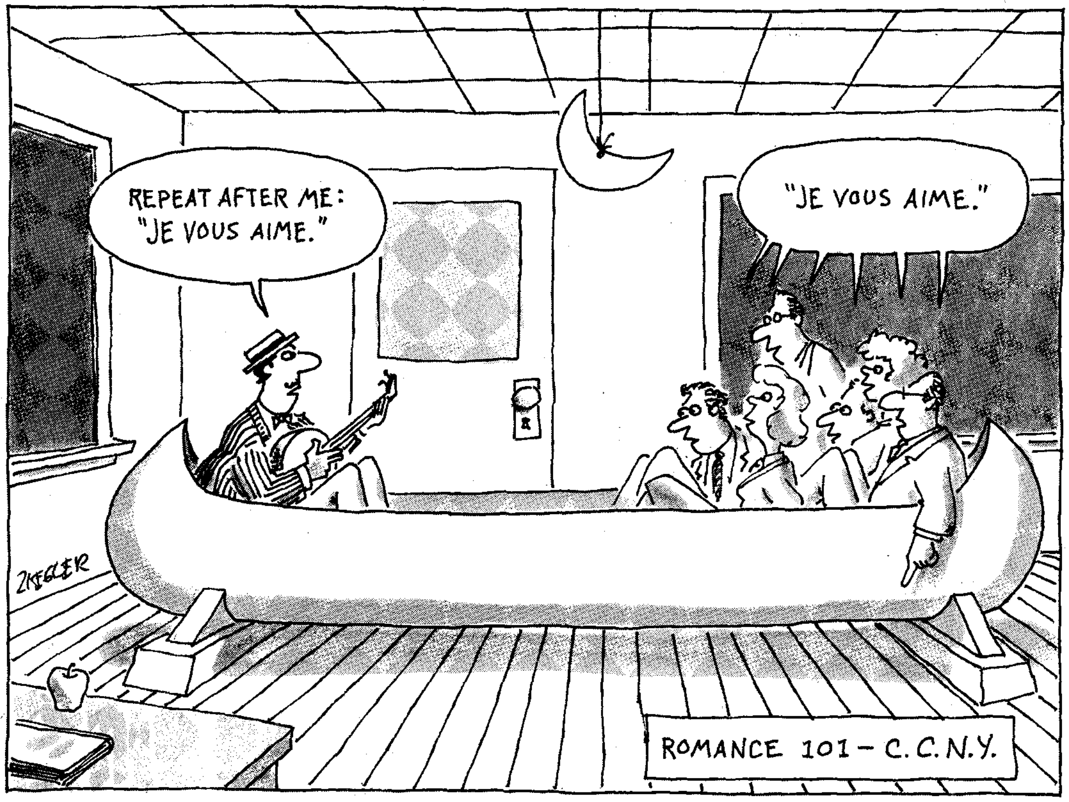
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ful weeds on the Great Plains came from Eurasian Russia with settlement in the nineteenth century. Before white men, the Great Plains had no Russian knapweed, no goat grass, no Russian olive, no cow cockle, no summer cypress. Corn cockle, which grows with winter wheat and makes bread taste bad when it gets ground up in flour, came from Russia. So did cheatgrass, the sticklike plant that takes over pastures and is not eaten by cows. Russian pigweed, which has spread from the Canadian plains to North Dakota and Montana, came originally from Siberia in 1886.

On the steppes, as on the plains, plants live in the wind. One Russian import that has done particularly well here is the Russian thistle, also called Russian cactus, saltwort, prickly glasswort, or wind witch. On the plains, its most common name is tumbleweed. Its seedlings appear in dry, sandy soil in the spring, and for a couple of months they are edible to livestock. When the weather gets warm, they become hard, woody, prickly bushes that crowd out other vegetation. In early fall, the stalk breaks loose from the ground, and the plant rolls away on the wind. A single plant may have from ten thousand to a hundred thousand seeds, which fall off as they ripen all through the winter. The winds can take the plant for miles in many directions, and the seeds it drops stay vital for several years. As the ground freezes in the winter, many species of plants on the Great Plains come loose and become tumbleweeds. The Russian thistle is the best traveller and the toughest tumbleweed for farmers to control.

Because tumbleweeds spend a lot more time in the wind than in the ground, they are not much use for cover, shade, or holding the soil in place. On the plains, from the point of view of human beings, the tumbleweed's main function is poetic. They roll and bounce on the wind, they fly through the air like half-filled weather balloons, they pile up in throngs against fences and buildings. The poet Anselm Hollo has written that a tumbleweed "looks like the skeleton of a brain." Everywhere on the plains, you see Tumbleweed Motels, Tumbleweed Cafés, Tumbleweed Liquors. In the Tumbleweed Bar, the jukebox is likely to have the song "Tumbling Tumbleweeds," by the Sons of the Pioneers, one of the most popular Western tunes ever. "Tumbleweeds" is a favorite syndicated cartoon strip, and in at least one prairie town Tumbleweed is the nickname of the travelling marijuana dealer. Tumbleweeds blow before the Kansas tornado at the beginning of "The Wizard of Oz." They are a signature of hundreds of old Westerns: the saloon doors swing back and forth, a tumbleweed rolls across a deserted street, the marshal and the bad guy walk slowly toward each other. In southern Russia, too, Russian thistles blow all over—in Turkestan, in the Crimea, on the Kirgiz Steppe, in Kazakhstan. Russians call them not Russian thistles but *perekati-pole*, which means "roll-across-the-field."

Exactly how and when these plant species came to the Great Plains is not certain. Probably, they accompanied the tens of thousands of German Catholics, Mennonites, Hutterites, Amish, and others who left southern Russia for the Great Plains in the eighteen-seventies. Almost all of these immigrants were people who had been adrift in Europe since the Protestant Reformation three hundred and fifty years before. Basically, the German Catholics were persecuted for saying that the Reformation went too far, and the Mennonites, the Hutterites, and the Amish for saying that it didn't go far enough. Those three groups were a type of radical Protestant sometimes called Anabaptist, because they did not believe in infant baptism. They believed that only adults who knew what they were getting into should be baptized. They also did not believe in swearing oaths, dancing, drinking, or gambling. At various times, certain Anabaptist sects were also opposed to marriage of cousins, tobacco, filing lawsuits, Fourth of July celebrations, buttons on clothing, circuses, and singing hymns in harmony. Most important, the Anabaptists believed in nonresistance, which meant they refused to serve in any war.

All these groups were in Russia in the first place because Catherine the Great had invited them. In addition to making John Ledyard miserable, Catherine waged a series of wars with

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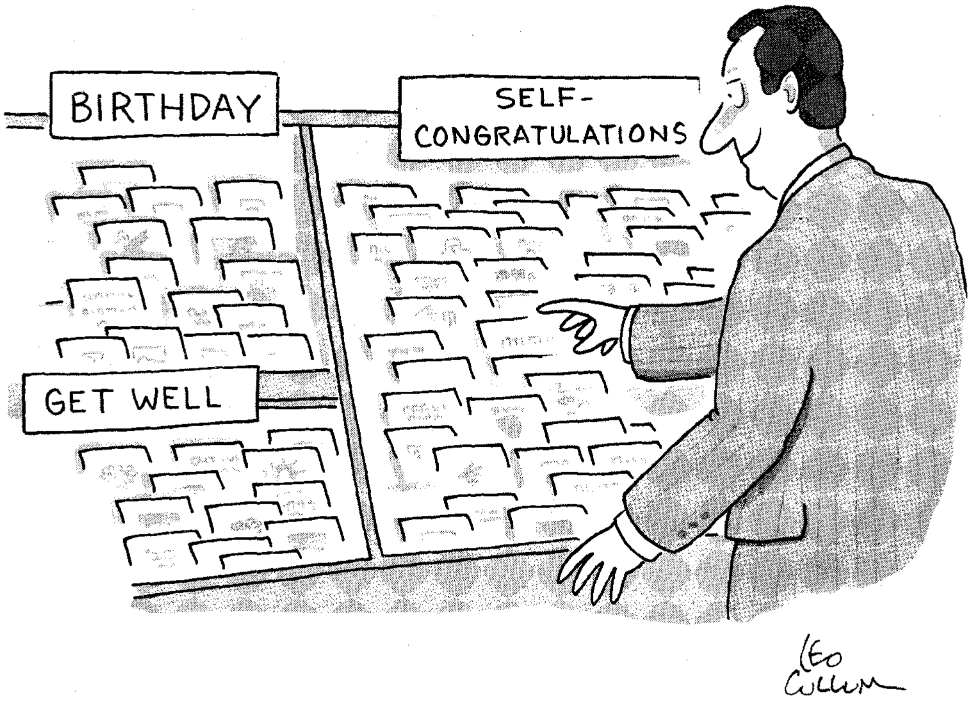

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Turkey, which won for Russia new lands along her southern border. Catherine was German herself, and she wanted these sober, German-speaking farmers to secure her conquests by settlement. To persuade the Mennonites to leave their homes in Polish Prussia, she promised them religious toleration, military exemption, a hundred and seventy-five acres of land per family, tax exemptions, transportation payments, a loan of five hundred rubles per family, and government support until the first harvest. At least six thousand Mennonites took her up on it. They settled the steppes so successfully that their numbers grew to forty-five thousand in less than a century. Then, in 1870, Czar Alexander II withdrew the special privileges that Catherine had offered them. They and half a million other German-speaking colonists were now supposed to become full Russians at last. They would have to serve in the Army, and their children would have to speak Russian in Russian schools. The emissaries the Mennonites sent to St. Petersburg to protest this order could protest only in German—which one minister said proved the Czar's point. The Mennonites were upset about losing their military exemption, and the German Catholics, who were not war resisters, did not want to lose their German schools. All the German colonists started thinking about other countries where they might move.

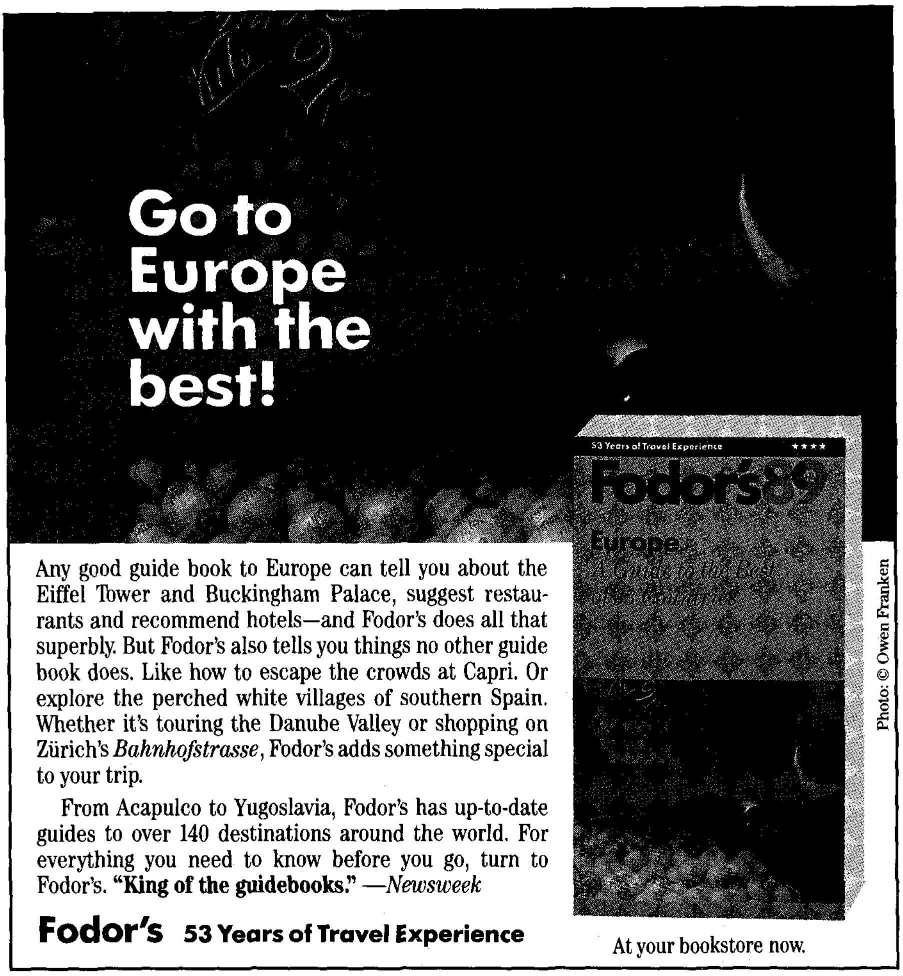
Right away, representatives of the American railroads showed up. If Germans made the best farmers, these Russian Germans were thought to be the best of all. The Santa Fe Railroad, which ran through Kansas, got into a bidding war for the Mennonites with Nebraska's Burlington & Missouri. Both railroads offered almost everything that a farmer could want—free hay, roads, buildings, railroad passes, shipping. The B. & M. eventually even offered free land, but most of the Mennonites favored the Santa Fe, mainly because they liked the Santa Fe's immigration agent, a tireless man named C. B. Schmidt, who spoke German, and who was finally kicked out of Russia for his skill in persuading people to leave.

Hoping for the same military exemption their group once had in Russia, several Mennonite elders went to Washington in 1873 to discuss the matter with President Grant. They were surprised to find him surrounded by none of the pomp that surrounded the Czar. Grant met them in a worn black frock coat and listened politely. As it happened, General Custer was there to see Grant at the same time. Custer, who was of German ancestry, spoke to the Mennonites in German, and later took them to a play, and they liked him—a man whose views on war could not have been more different from their own. General Grant made the Mennonites no promises. Canada, which was also eager for Mennonite settlers, enacted a law specifically exempting them from military service, but Congress never did. However, such laws passed the legislatures of Kansas, Nebraska, and Minnesota—which meant little, since it was not usually the business of the states to raise armies. Of the ten thousand or so Russian Mennonites who came to America, the majority settled in south-central Kansas and built villages often with the same names and the same street plans as the villages they had left in Russia.

As it turned out, the Russian Mennonites made ideal plains farmers—they had been practicing on the steppes for nearly a hundred years. They knew how to build houses from sod, how to use manure and grass for fuel, how to be content on an isolated frontier. The same plagues of grasshoppers that sometimes attack the plains attack the steppes; the Mennonites drove them from the fields with flails into the surrounding grass, then set the grass on fire. Most important, the Mennonites knew what to plant. Each Mennonite family had brought a bushel or more of Crimean wheat from Russia. This wheat, a hard, red, short-stemmed variety later called Turkey Red, was resistant to heat, cold, and drought. It was the right crop for the plains, and the Mennonites knew to cultivate it with four plowings, to make the soil hold moisture better. With this wheat and this technique, Mennonite farmers were able to move from the river valleys onto the drier, windier tablelands where no one else had yet figured out how to farm.

A problem with hard wheat was that it was more difficult to mill than the soft wheats. Millers in Minneapolis and the East did not like it, and paid less for it. So the Mennonites built their own mills. Their Turkey Red wheat kept them in business through drought years when many other plains farmers were going under. In the eighteen-nineties, the Mennonites attracted the attention of an employee of the Department of Agriculture named Mark Alfred Carleton. He was interested in finding good varieties of crops for dryland farming; his title was Cerealist in Charge of Grain Investigations. Carleton noticed the success of the Mennonites' Crimean wheat, and of another possibly Russian wheat, called Red Fife, which had been growing well on the Canadian plains. He decided to take a trip to Russia. His superiors were reluctant to send him with no knowledge of the language, so he learned it. He left for Russia in the summer of 1898, and travelled to parts of the steppes that were even colder and drier than the plains, figuring that grains from there would be more than strong enough for America. On the Kirgiz Steppe, in the real Russian boondocks, Carleton obtained from a farmer named Gnyezdilov a variety of wheat called Kubanka. When he brought it back, it proved even better for some kinds of dryland farming than Turkey Red. Another variety of wheat that Carleton found, the Kharkov, worked well on the northern plains, and both varieties were also highly resistant to black stem rust, a grain parasite that wiped out many wheats on the plains in 1904. Carleton went around to millers urging them to buy more hard Russian wheat. He also began a campaign to get Americans to eat more macaroni, since hard wheats made good pasta. Eventually, people listened to him. By 1914, farmers on the Great Plains were producing tens of millions of bushels of Kubanka and Kharkov wheat.

When the Mennonite elders met with President Grant in 1873, he had assured them that the United States was not likely to be in a war for fifty years. Not counting the brief Spanish-American War, in 1898, Grant was off by only a few years. After America entered the First World War, in 1917, Congress passed the first universal-conscription act since the Civil War. This act contained a clause exempting from combatant service "members of any well-organized religious sect or organization at present organized and existing" whose beliefs did not allow them to participate in war. The act said that such people would be given noncombatant service, but did not spell out what that service would be. About half the Mennonites who were drafted agreed to perform noncombatant service. The other half said that any service at all that aided the conduct of war was wrong. They reported for induction and then refused to wear uniforms or follow any orders, so the Army imprisoned many of them. The Kansas City *Star*, the Chicago *Tribune*, and much of America reviled them. The fact that members of this isolated, strange sect spoke German did nothing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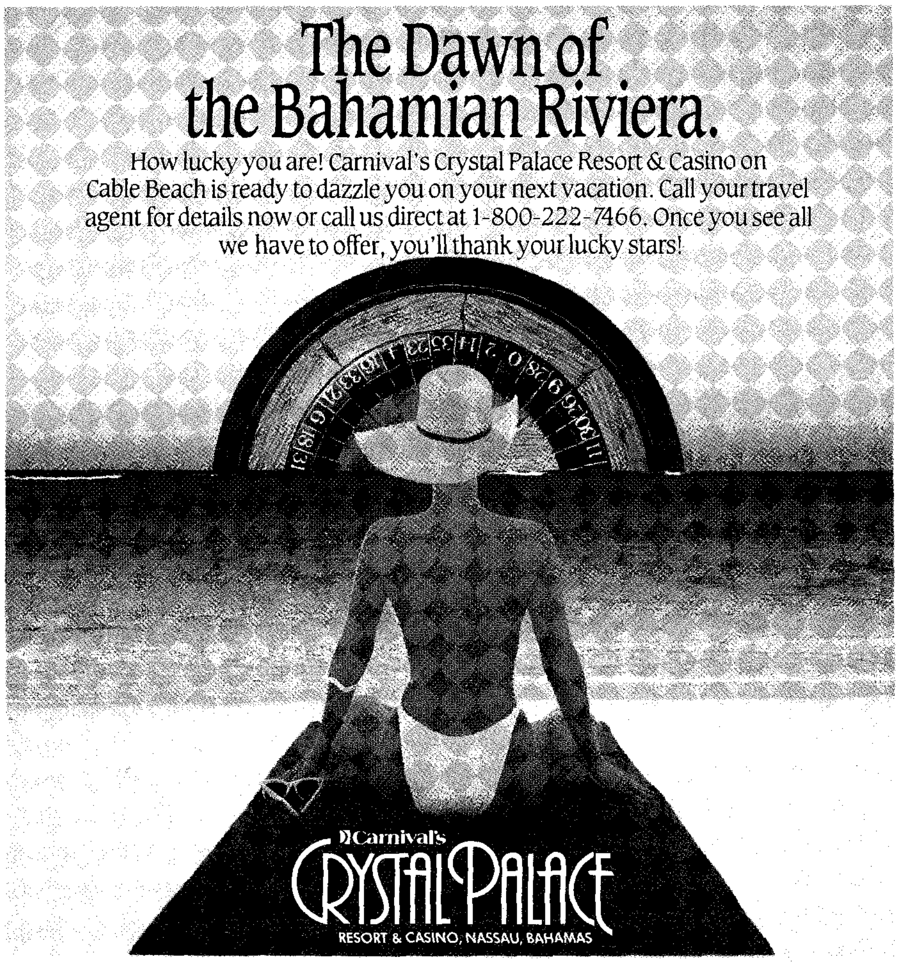
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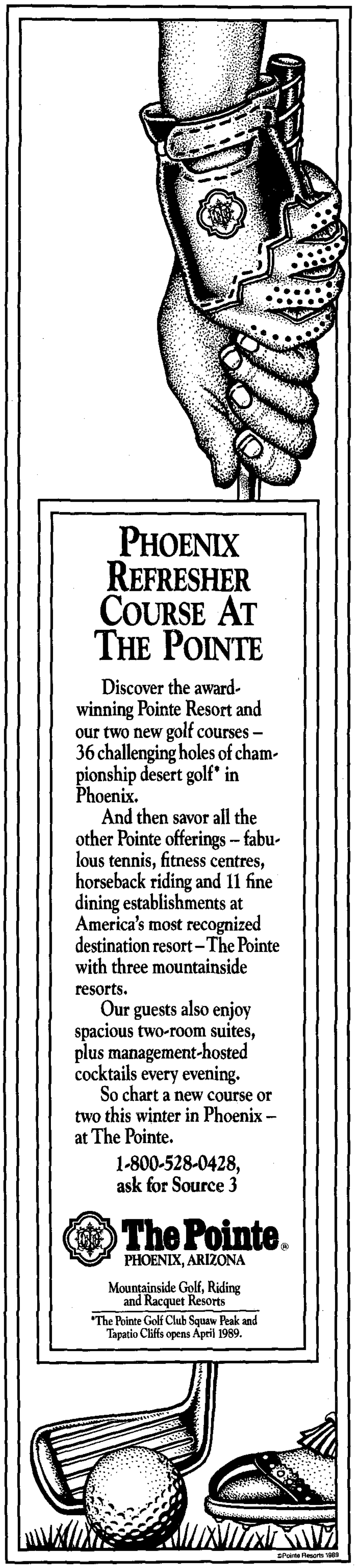

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to improve their standing in public opinion. Mobs painted their meetinghouses yellow or burned them down. Several Mennonites were tarred and feathered. Teddy Roosevelt said the Mennonites were not fit to live in America. Eventually, seventy-six Mennonites, the grandsons of men who had left Russia rather than serve in the Czar's Army, were court-martialled, given terms of from ten to thirty years, and sent to the Army prison at Fort Leavenworth.

The First World War changed the Great Plains more than any other event in recent history. At the start of the war, America, Canada, and Russia were the leading wheat-exporting nations of the world. Largely because of seeds brought from the steppes to the Great Plains, America was now selling as much wheat to the world's major wheat-importing nations in Western Europe as Russia was. When the Turkish Navy blockaded the Dardanelles in 1914, it stopped the flow of Russian wheat down from the Black Sea. Suddenly, like one kidney when the other is removed, the Great Plains had to work twice as hard. Farmers began to plow up land they had not considered planting before, and hundreds of thousands of acres of marginal land went under new lightweight tractors. By 1920, there were twice as many plowed acres on the southern plains as there had been in 1910. The price of wheat went from around a dollar a bushel in 1914 to two-ten a bushel in 1917. Farmers became rich, bought better equipment and more land, acquired more debt.

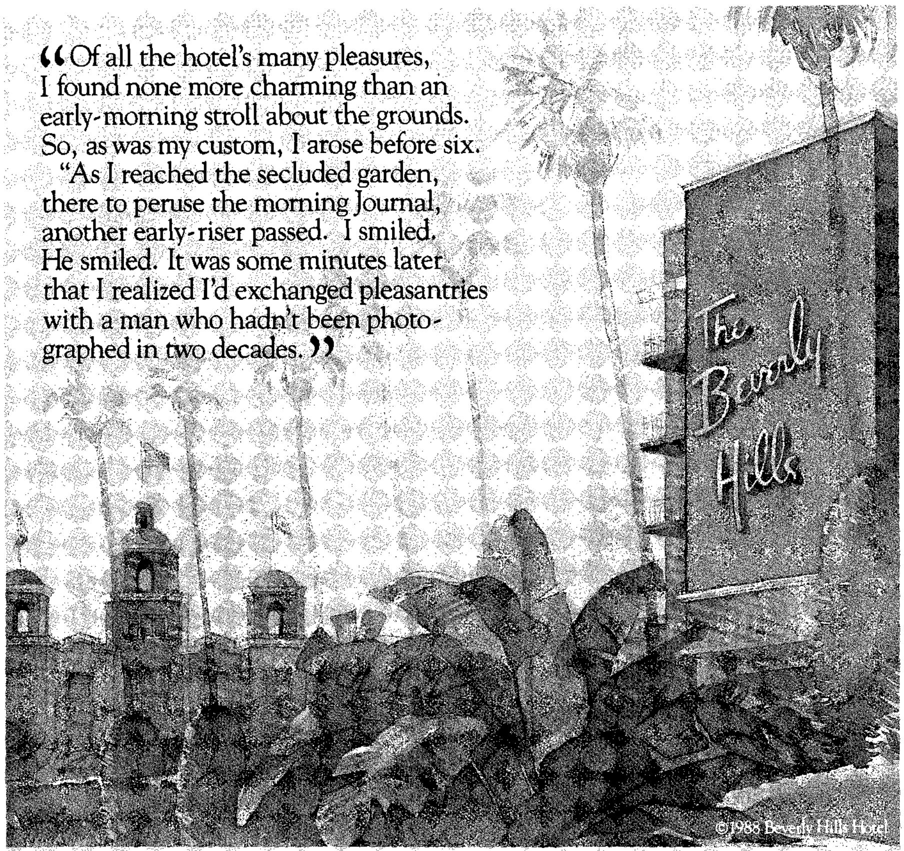
Prairie is much easier to plow under than it is to restore. When the war ended and the price of wheat fell, plains farmers did not respond by taking land out of production. Instead, many of them used their new equipment to plant as much as possible, partly in an attempt to outrun the debt that buying the new equipment had involved. Farming the plains became a speculative venture. People who lived elsewhere bought plains land and planted wheat on it during vacations in the fall; then, if the price was high enough, they returned to harvest in the summer. Much of the plains was dry during irregular rainfalls in the nineteen-twenties; 1931 was wet, and a good year for wheat production but a bad year for prices. Then, in 1932, the rain stopped. People had been farming the plains long enough to know that drought returned in regular cycles. This time, much of the native sod of grasses and roots that had held the soil in place since the last Ice Age was gone.

So began the first of the great modern ecocatastrophes. The year 1933 was drier than 1932. Early in 1934, planting seemed ridiculous—plows turned up a dust as dry and fine as cornstarch. In February, the wind began to blow, and the dust began to fly. In mid-April, a giant dust cloud, black at the base and tan at the top, rose from the fields of eastern Colorado and western Kansas and began to move south. Inside the cloud, darkness was total, and remained for hours after the cloud passed. People in the cloud's path thought the end of the world had come, and went to churches to await it. The storm left dead birds and rabbits in its wake, and drifts of dust six feet deep against the sides of houses. On May 10th, another dust storm came up, on a wind from the west. This one blew all the way to the Eastern Seaboard, and blocked out the sun in New York City for five hours. People came home from work in an eerie half-light like the light during an eclipse. Dust got into the threads of water bottles and inside watchcases. Great Plains dust showered ships three hundred miles out in the Atlantic. All of Chicago was inches deep in it. That one storm dropped twelve million tons of plains topsoil on the city. All year, the dusters kept blowing. They were identified by color: brown dust storms came from Kansas, red ones from Oklahoma, and dirty-yellow ones from Texas and New Mexico. Farmers watched their fields disappear before their eyes. Tumbleweeds blew up against fences, caught the dust, and were buried. Fence lines were so deep in dust that cattle with mud-coated lungs could stagger away over them. People crammed wet newspapers around windows and doors and slept with wet handkerchiefs over their faces. Lung disease was everywhere. In the winter, snow mingled with the blowing dusters. These were called "snirt" storms.

The Fick Fossil Museum has a photograph of a towering dark-brown cloud with tucks at the bottom rolling across the earth. The caption reads, "The Grandfather of them All—First Duststorm of 1935." This may be the storm that inspired a famous American folk song. On April 14, 1935, a black dust storm from western Kansas blew down into the Texas Panhandle. The songwriter Woody Guthrie, who was living in Pampa, Texas, took a look at the approaching storm and wrote "So Long, It's Been Good to Know You."

In Washington, dust hung in the air of the congressional hearing room as officials of the Department of Agriculture asked for more money for soil conservation. Dust came into the Oval Office and settled on President Roosevelt's desk. By the fall of '34, Roosevelt had approved a drought-relief program, Congress had passed emergency crop-support measures for farmers in the plains states, and the Department of Agriculture had begun paying ranchers for skinny, dust-sick cattle no one else would buy. One soil-conservation idea that Roosevelt came up with and liked a lot was planting a line of trees in a twenty-million-acre windbreak, or "shelterbelt," all the way across the Great Plains, from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. This idea was widely laughed at, and agricultural and forestry experts persuaded Roosevelt to modify the program so that individual farmers could plant shelterbelts around their fields and houses instead. The rows of wind-bent cottonwood, hackberry, elm, honey locust, and pine that you often see to the windward of abandoned or long-gone farmhouses are the mark Roosevelt left on the Great Plains.

Some farmers plowed deep furrows around their fields to stop them from blowing, stretched snow fences, and met in churches daily to pray for rain. By the hundreds of thousands, others left. Because so many were from western Oklahoma, these people were called Okies, but refugees came from every Great Plains state. A person who stuck it out in Williams County, North Dakota, noted later, "The people who moved away then never came back." The years of the Dust Bowl were the beginning of some of the plains' biggest farm holdings, as surviving farmers bought the others out. In some counties, the blowing was so bad that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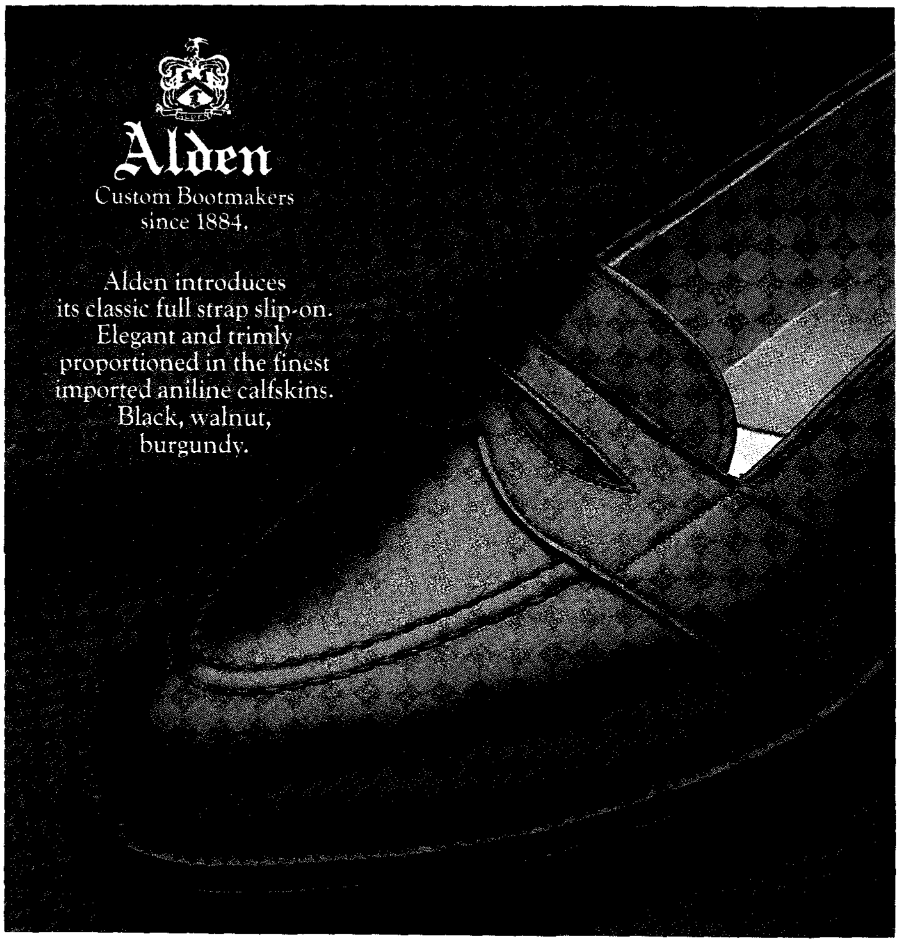
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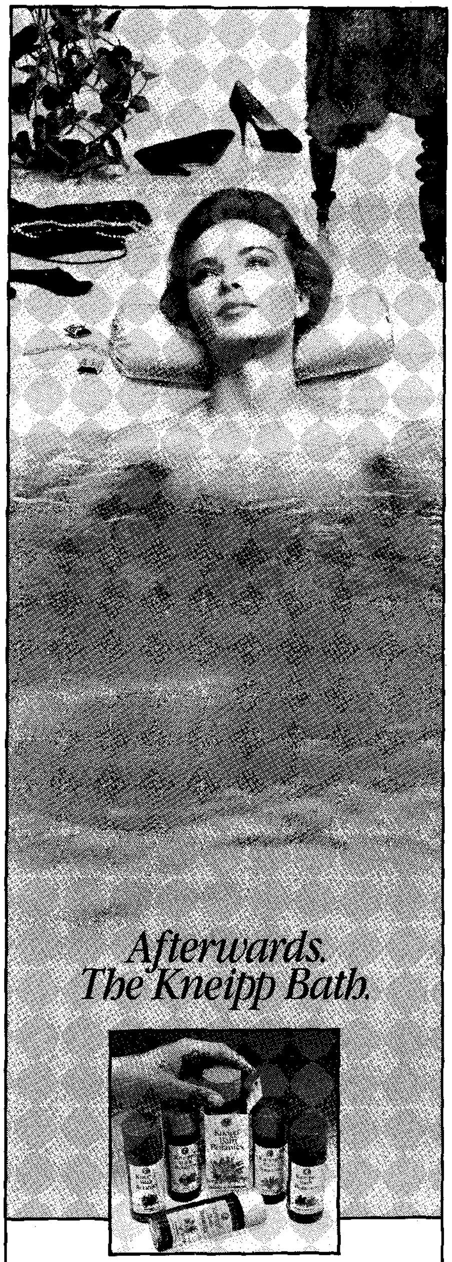

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farmers could find nobody to sell to. The federal government eventually bought millions of acres of windblown land and began trying to restore it to grass. The Comanche National Grassland, in Baca County, Colorado, is one of the results. A land company that had once tried to get people to buy farmland in Baca County had advertised it as part of “what is known as the Rain Belt’ ” of eastern Colorado; in the nineteen-thirties, much of Baca County blew away.

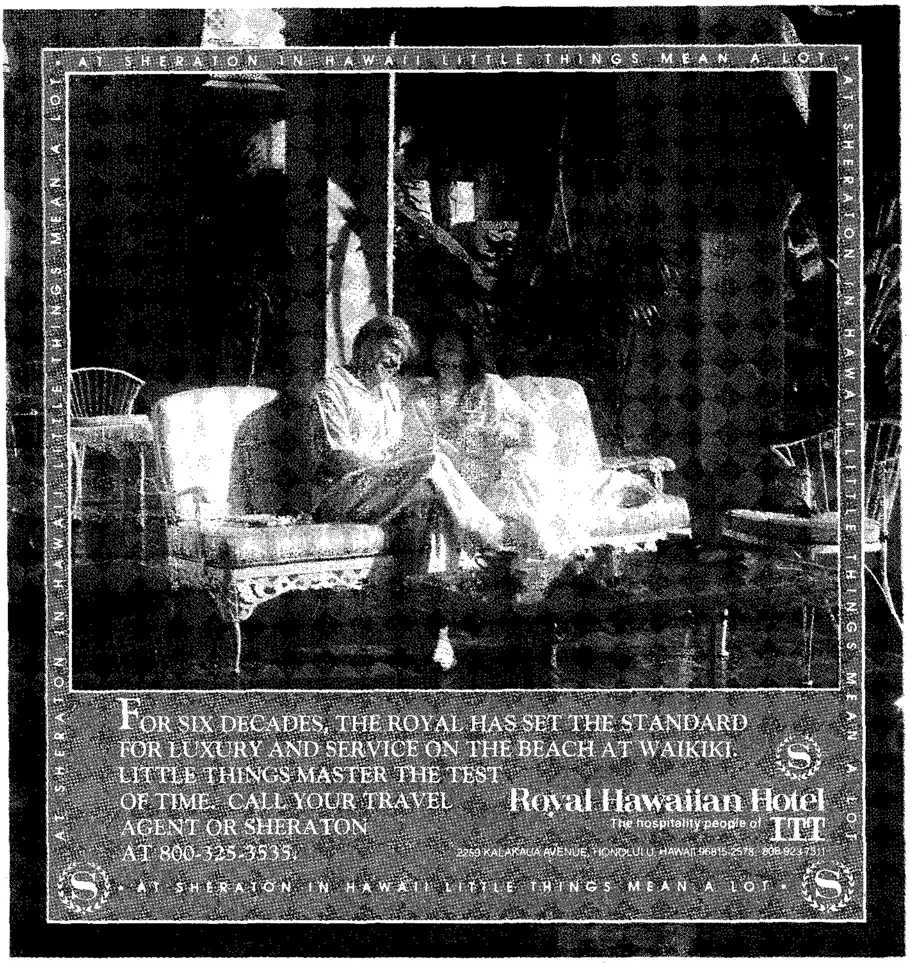
Of the farmers who survived, many got government help, through crop-support or other payments. They learned to hold on to their topsoil by contour plowing and strip farming, by leaving crop stubble standing in their fields after harvest, and by planting windbreaks. In 1941, the rains came back, world war made the price of wheat go up again, and some farmers again made lots of money. After the war, a recent invention called the deep-well turbine pump, which could move water much more efficiently than the old centrifugal pump, showed farmers on the southern plains that they were sitting on a great reservoir of groundwater, and they began to mine it for irrigation at a rate that now threatens to drain it within fifty years. Geologists named this reservoir the Ogallala Aquifer. Its water has turned a number of Dust Bowl counties greener than they ever were before. When it runs dry, the desert that came in the nineteen-thirties to depopulate the farms and eat big holes in the prairie will return.

TODAY, the Great Plains are more than linked to Russia; they are also, in a sense, aimed at it. The propellants that deliver American nuclear missiles to their targets are solid fuels that all happen to absorb moisture from the air during storage. Solid rocket fuel is often made of explosives, like nitrocellulose, and oxidants, like ammonium perchlorate, suspended in a neutral substance, like aluminum powder with a polymer binder. Solid fuels are safer and easier to handle than liquid fuels. Unfortunately, the solid part of the fuel absorbs water vapor as readily as it did the explosive chemicals, and once the fuel gets even a little wet it changes. Modern ballistic missiles control their flight not by flaps and fins but by directing the flow of thrust out the back end. For this to work, the fuel must burn at a regular rate. Fuel that has been wet burns erratically; in particular, it develops fissures, or “grain cracks,” which combustion follows. A bad grain crack can burn at such an angle as to melt through the outside of the missile and cause it to tumble. Even more vulnerable to moisture than the fuel is the circuitry of the missile's on-board computer-and-guidance system. The easiest way to wreck a nuclear missile would be to keep it in a damp basement. For this reason, the Air Force prefers arid places for its land-based-missile installations. The driest part of America that is the farthest from major population centers and the closest (via the great-circle route above the Arctic) to the Soviet Union happens to be the northern Great Plains. Of America's twenty-seven hundred and fifty or so land-based nuclear warheads, about eighteen hundred and fifty sit on top of Minuteman and MX missiles there.

Driving on the prairie near Great Falls, Montana, or Minot, North Dakota, or Cheyenne, Wyoming, you might not realize right away that you are in a weapons system. A nuclear-missile silo is one of the quintessential Great Plains objects: to the eye, it is almost nothing—just one or two acres of ground with a concrete slab in the middle and some posts and poles sticking up behind an eight-foot-high cyclone fence—but to the imagination it is the end of the world. The little sign on the fence does not mention the destructive power of thousands of Hiroshimas sitting just a few yards away. It does say that this is a restricted area, and that deadly force may be used to prevent intrusion. In the lonesomest stretch of prairie, you could find no faster way of meeting people than rattling that fence for a minute or two. Attached to the fence are sensors that set alarms ringing in Air Force control centers whenever anything bumps against it. Cattle, horses, antelope, and big tumbleweeds set off alarms from time to time. Depending on where the alarm comes from and how many false alarms they've been getting recently, security forces then jump in vans or armored vehicles and head for the silo at full speed.

Beneath the concrete slab—the silo door—is the tip of a Minuteman II, a Minuteman III, or an MX. The Minuteman II carries a single warhead, the Minuteman III carries three independently targeted warheads, and the MX up to ten. The missiles are between fifty-seven and seventy-one feet long and up to seven feet seven inches across. Each silo contains a single missile, as well as support and launch equipment on platforms around the missile. The missile's guidance system depends on the fixed spin of several high-speed gyroscopes. Getting the gyroscopes running is too delicate a task to be left to the last minute, so once they are started up they run all the time. A flow of sodium-chromate solution in which no organisms can live cools the gyros as they spin at many thousands of r.p.m.s. No people stay in the silo. Each group of ten missiles is fired from an always manned underground launch-control center nearby. The main color inside the silo is a "2001: A Space Odyssey" white. There are no chairs. On top of a computer console or in a corner might be a cloth bag of commercial dehumidifying salts. Night and day beneath the prairie, the gyros hum. The air in the sealed-up silo holds a faint smell of the Old Spice aftershave that the last Air Force maintenance people to visit wore.

If you did not follow the last twenty years of the arms race, here is how some of it went: From the sixties through the mid-seventies, the Soviet Union developed a new generation of long-range nuclear missiles, the SS-17, SS-18, and SS-19, which were thought to be the most accurate missiles in the world. A Minuteman silo supposedly cannot survive a nuclear hit at closer than three hundred and seventy metres; according to Central Intelligence Agency reports at the time, the SS-18 was accurate to within a hundred and eighty metres. American strategists began to fear that the Soviet Union could now destroy most of the Minuteman silos in a first strike, and they popularized their fear with the phrase "window of vulnerability," which they said America now had. To defend against this threat, the Carter Administration wanted to build a new missile, the MX, which could carry multiple warheads, and which would be deployed on mobile launchers on three thousand miles of track beneath the desert in Utah and Nevada. When Ronald Reagan was elected, he did not like the idea of a mobile MX, but instead wanted to house the new missiles in existing Minuteman silos. Debate over the MX went on for years. Meanwhile, the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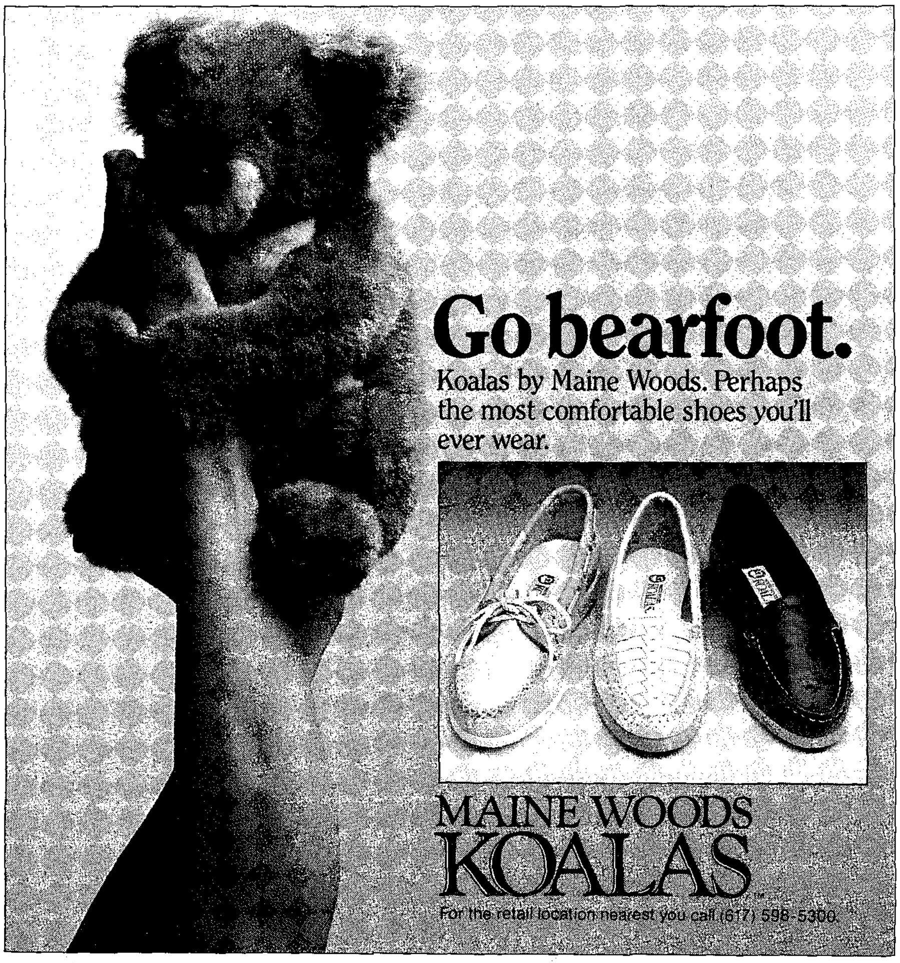
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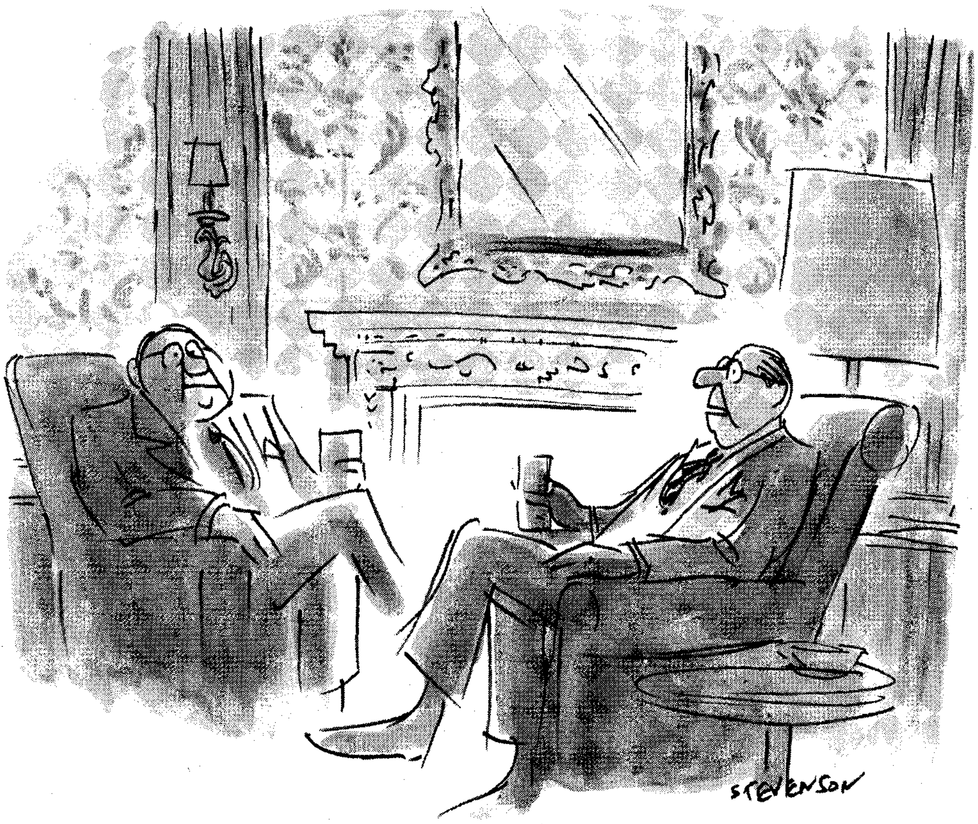

"I can't decide which I'd rather do—make a twenty-billion-dollar bid or turn down a twenty-billion-dollar bid."

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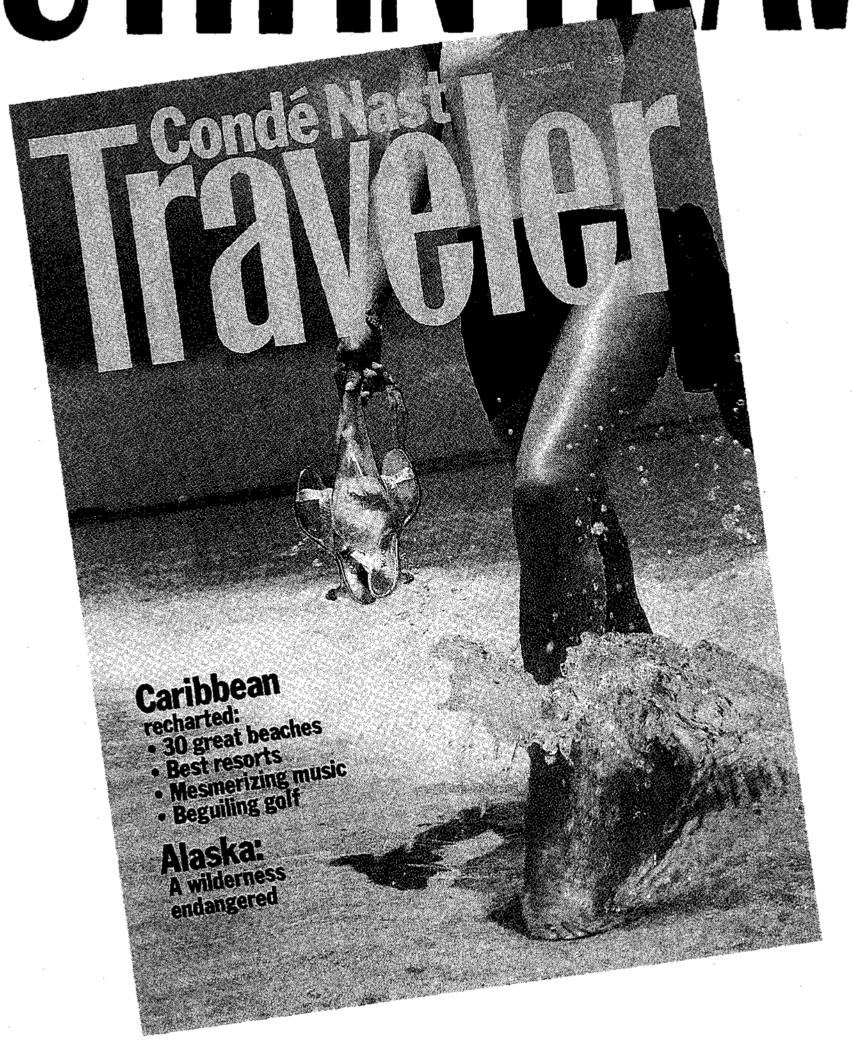
C.I.A. revised its opinion of the Soviet missiles, and said they might not be so accurate after all. Eventually, the MX was built. By the end of 1988, fifty MXs went into silos in Wyoming that had been "hardened" with additional concrete and steel. The recent development of other weapons systems, like the Midgetman missile, which is small enough to be fired from a truck or an airplane, and new, long-range submarine-launched missiles, creates the possibility that the Soviet Union may soon have a window of vulnerability of its own. Since both America and the Soviet Union have concentrated on weapons designed mainly to destroy the weapons of the other, neither country can now afford to wait out a first strike. A missile that is not fired quickly might end up not being fired at all. America used to say that it would absorb a first strike before firing back; today it does not rule out a policy of "launch under attack." Presumably, the Soviet Union does not, either. All of which means that any silo you stop to look at on the northern plains probably holds a missile with the locations of ten or more Soviet missiles in its targeting computer. And someplace in Russia—probably in an underground silo in western Siberia along the trans-Siberia railroad—a missile knows about this exact piece of nowhere prairie.

The Air Force personnel who look after the missiles in Montana are stationed at Malmstrom Air Force Base, just outside Great Falls. The public-information officers there answer questions by mail about the Minuteman system with a vague line drawing of a missile in a silo. To callers who wish to chat about the missile installations they reply in the most general terms. Then, in the summer, the base holds an open house for anybody who wants to come, and officers and enlisted men show their visitors around and tell them just about anything they want to know. This event, called Big Sky Days, is usually on a weekend in July. One year, along with about twenty-nine thousand other people, I went. At the gate, an Air Force guy in a short-sleeved blue uniform shirt was directing traffic. Nearby he had parked a Chevy Blazer with the doors open, so he could listen to the radio. "Standing in the Light," by Fleetwood Mac, was playing. Malmstrom is mostly runway. The thousands of cars parked together took up only a little piece of it. In the distance, heat shimmers rose where it seemed to disappear around the curve of the earth.

Big Sky Days was the kind of summer event where people in shorts walk around dazed and asquint. Long lines waited to go up into the camouflage-painted B-52. In a big hangar, Air Force wives and local groups ran booths selling Rambo Hotdogs and "Commie Busters" T-shirts. At one booth, kids could get their faces painted camouflage. By the end of the day, about half the kids had. An M-60 tank in the middle of the hangar drew kids by the hundred. It was like the most popular rock at Monkey Island. Members of Air Force security in mesh flak jackets and black berets, with automatic rifles across their backs, helped kids climbing on and off. By the hangar doors, pilots in flight suits walked up to each other and put their heads together. Then, after a moment, they threw back their heads and laughed big open-mouth pilot laughs.

I talked to an airman, name tag "D. Moir," whose job for the day was to stand by a vehicle designed for transporting warheads and explain it. "I enlisted to learn aircraft maintenance at a base near where I live back East, and they gave me missile maintenance out here," he said. He told me the name of the vehicle, which was an acronym about six letters long. The vehicle looked like a strange house trailer, and its dark, padded interior smelled like a new TV. An off-duty airman who said his name was Jay kept D. Moir company, straddling a racing bicycle and bumping it back and forth between his knees. Jay was wearing shorts, a T-shirt with the arms ripped off, and white-rimmed sunglasses on a purple cord. "Dwight and I are technicians. We do computer maintenance," Jay said. "There's two kinds of missile technicians—electronic and mechanical. We're electronic. Malmstrom can be kind of a cliquey place. The computer guys usually hang out with each other, and so do the support people—cooks, logistics-and-transport guys, like that—and the mechanics, and the launch officers, and the security cops. Especially the cops. Those guys in the black berets, they may not be that smart. But I'll tell you one thing, they are some gung-ho soldiers. Last week,

TRUTH IN TRAVEL



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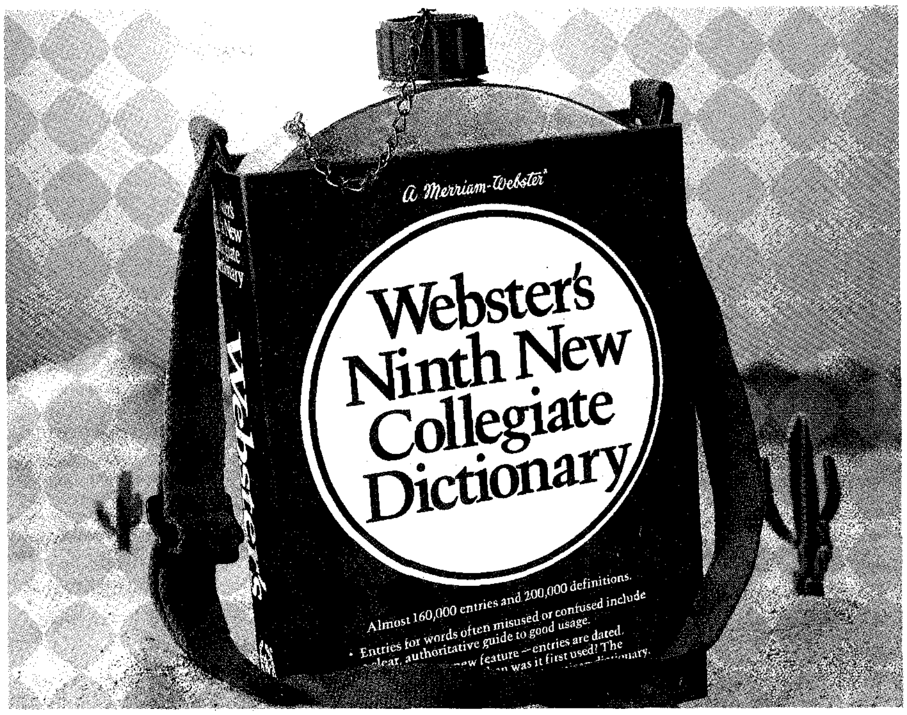
I was with a crew out at an L.F.—launch facility, that's a silo—and when we radioed back we screwed up and forgot the password, so we just said, 'Well, nothing to do now but wait.' About four minutes later, this helicopter comes over the horizon and sets down and these security guys jump off with the guns pointed *at* us, and they had us down on our noses in the dirt. And they *knew* who we were. But at least it was some excitement. This duty can get pretty boring sometimes. Like every three months or so, they change the target codes in all the Minuteman IIs, and we have to go out and put in the new codes. The codes come in a suitcase-like thing, looks like a big cassette. That's been every day for the last two weeks: loadin' codes. Drive all the way out to an L.F., go down, take out the old codes, slip in the new codes, close up, get in the truck, drive back. Loadin' codes, man. In a few months, all the Minuteman IIs are changing over to remote loading, so we won't have to do that anymore. Can't happen soon enough for me. There's silos out there that are three and a half hours from the base by road, one way. And you're not supposed to drive faster than fifty on pavement or twenty-five on gravel—supposedly. Almost everything that has to do with missiles is 'supposedly.' But I'll tell you, you wreck one of those trucks and they take it out of your pay."

To train people to work in missile silos, Malmstrom has a silo on the base. They call it a Trainer Launch Facility, and it is like a real silo except that the missile it holds is not live. I went down in the silo with a bunch of other people on a tour led by Staff Sergeant John Swift. Sergeant Swift had a freckled face off a cover of *Boy's Life* aged with a red toothbrush mustache. His eyes roved beyond his listeners as he spoke, like a man at a cocktail party hoping to spot a closer friend. Sergeant Swift led us along the doughnut-shaped platform that encircles the missile. The platform was twelve inches deep in foam-rubber padding, and it felt funny to walk on. On it were an air-conditioning unit, a dehumidifier, a coolant pump for the missile's gyros, the circuitry for the security system, a radio receiver, a scrambler, a decoder, and the computers that talk and listen to the missile. The padding was to cushion any jolts to this equipment. Sergeant Swift said the whole platform was suspended from cables which would allow it to bounce three feet in either direction. The support equipment was connected to the missile by a thick, veined cable called the umbilical. No matter how high-tech things get, there is always a big cable lying around somewhere. Sergeant Swift explained the operation of the missile's guidance system so quickly that he might have been speaking Malay. He showed us the pewter-colored tip of the missile—the warhead shell—that was made of titanium. He said that it was ablative. I had not heard that word since Latin class. In rocketry, it means designed to ablate, or burn away smoothly and slowly during reëntry into the atmosphere. Improvements in the ways warheads ablate is one reason they have got more accurate. Sergeant Swift said that in the event of a near-hit that tipped the silo on its side it could still fire the missile from an angle lower than ninety degrees. He said that he had been working on these missiles for years, and could tell by the sound when he opened the silo hatch whether the gyros and the support equipment were running right.

The question everybody wanted to ask was "So, how do you fire one of these things?" Sergeant Swift's eyes roved farther beyond us as he began his recitation; the end of the world is a pretty personal subject, after all. He said that each group of ten missiles is controlled from a Launch Control Center—also called a capsule—fifty to ninety feet below ground, where two Air Force officers wait on duty around the clock. When they receive an order to launch, they open a safe locked with two combination locks and take out two launch keys, which look like car keys. They insert the keys in control locks about fifteen feet apart in a computer console. They make sure the order is genuine by checking it against a verification code, they retarget the missiles as the order requires, they give the computer an "enabling code" to free the missiles for firing, and they talk to officers in four other capsules in a conference call via underground cable. One of these officers is the launch leader. The launch leader says, "Stand by for key turn." Everybody waits. At the launch time indicated in the order, the launch leader tells the officers to turn their keys, and they turn them down and to the right to a position marked "LAUNCH," and hold them for two seconds. In most circumstances, it takes four officers—two in two capsules—turning their keys in close succession to fire one or all of a flight of ten missiles. The key turn sends a signal to the missile that begins its terminal countdown. This lasts a few seconds or as long as several hours, depending on the launch order. The missile "acid dumps"—that is, it activates its batteries by dumping acid into them. The missile is now on internal command and will accept no orders but its own. It drops its umbilical. It fires its engines, and a smoke ring sixty feet across rises from the silo. A surge of smoke and flames follows the ring. The missile comes shooting through the smoke and flames into the sky.

Sergeant Swift pointed out the canisters of explosives overhead whose job it was to blast away the silo door. They were six inches in diameter and two to three feet long. The slow ominous opening of missile-bay doors with which movies like to indicate the beginning of the Third World War is a fiction. Out here, a bystander would know the Third World War was coming if he heard a big bang and saw a hundred-and-ten-ton concrete silo door go flying a quarter mile or more across the prairie.

The other question everybody asked was "How much does all this stuff cost?" Sergeant Swift said that each silo cost about twenty million dollars. In fact, costs having to do with nuclear weapons are hard to pin down. When I later wrote to the Office of Air Force History to ask about the total amount spent so far on the Minuteman, they wrote back to say that looking for that information would be too expensive. The first silo of the two hundred in Malmstrom's wing went into the ground in 1961. It contained a Minuteman I missile. In the sixties, the Minuteman I began to be replaced by Minuteman II. In the seventies, many Minuteman IIs were replaced by Minuteman IIIs. Each generation of missiles took years to develop, test, and build. From 1962 to 1965, the Air Force spent about two billion dollars a year on Minuteman I. (A billion dollars then is about the same as four billion dollars now.) The next generations of missiles cost at least as much. In the late seventies, all the Minuteman silos were improved with new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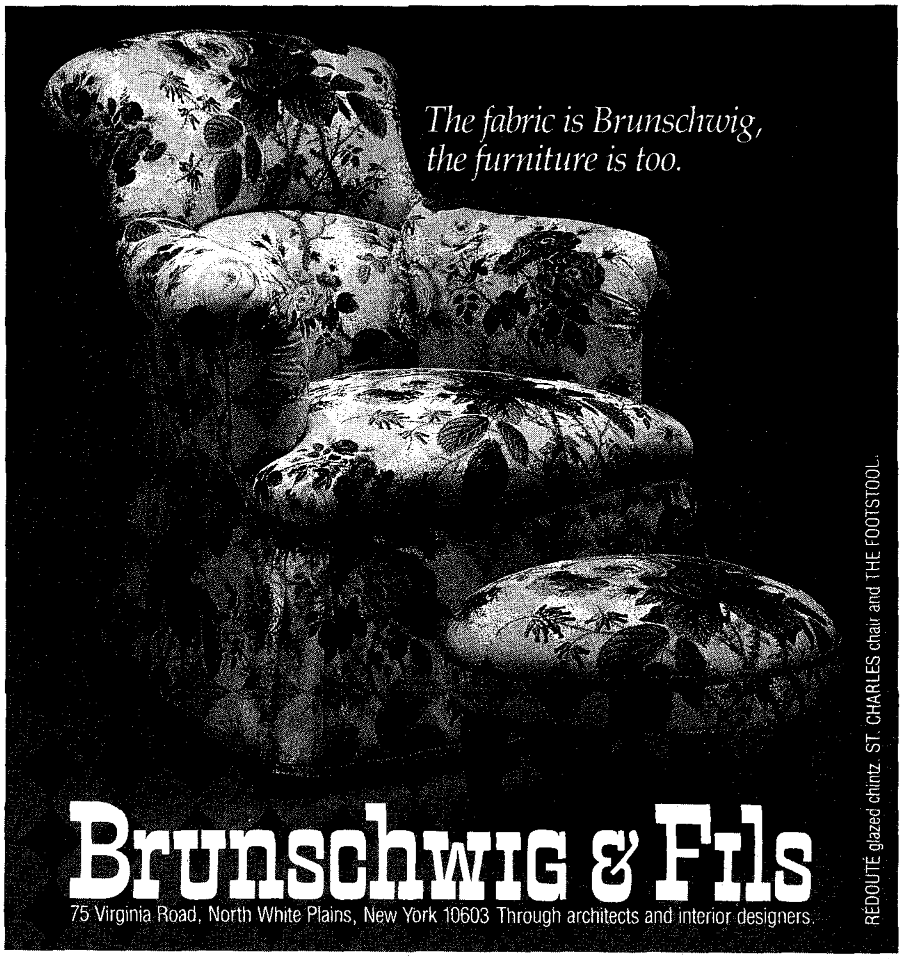

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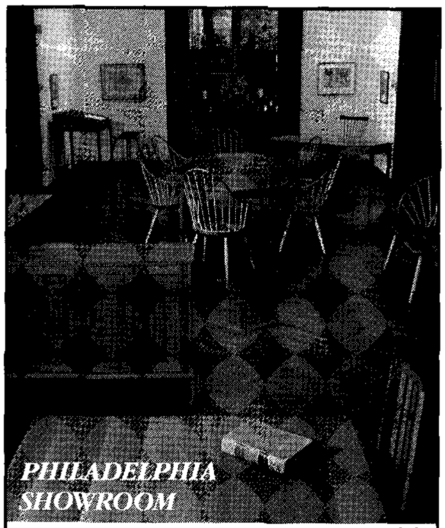

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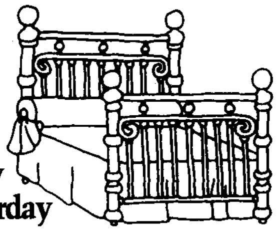

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support equipment, hardened silo doors, emergency power systems, and better targeting computers. Maintenance and testing of the missiles never stop. The Minuteman is an organism that requires a continuous flow of money. Just building the missiles has cost perhaps a hundred billion present-day dollars. With the additional costs, the total might be as high as a hundred and fifty billion spent on the system to date. There are a thousand silos at the six Minuteman bases. A thousandth of a hundred and fifty billion is a hundred and fifty million. So you might say that a single silo represents about a hundred and fifty million dollars in total spending. Montana's Pondera County, which contains many of Malmstrom's silos, produced about thirty million dollars' worth of agricultural goods in a recent year. A single missile silo would equal about five years' worth of all the cattle, wheat, and barley in Pondera County.

The fifty MXs recently installed in silos in Wyoming cost about a hundred and forty-eight million dollars apiece. Laramie County, Wyoming, where the first MX went in, produces about forty million dollars' worth of agricultural goods a year. The total cost so far of the MX is about fifteen billion dollars. Before all the hundred projected MXs are in place, the cost may be twenty-five billion. Add what was spent for the now abandoned Safeguard Anti-Ballistic Missile system to the amounts for the Minuteman and the MX, and the total approaches two hundred billion dollars. In a good year, the four-hundred-odd counties on the Great Plains produce agricultural goods—beef, cotton, hay, feed grain, much of the world's wheat—worth about nineteen billion dollars.

This, finally, is the punch line of our two hundred years on the Great Plains: we trap out the beaver, subtract the Mandan, infect the Blackfeet and the Hidatsa and the Assiniboin, overdose the Arikara; call the land a desert and hurry across it to get to California and Oregon; suck up the buffalo, bones and all; kill off nations of elk and wolves and cranes and prairie chickens and prairie dogs; dig up the gold and rebury it in vaults someplace else; ruin the Sioux and Cheyenne and Arapaho and Crow and Kiowa and Comanche; kill Crazy Horse, kill Sitting Bull; harvest wave after wave of immigrants' dreams and send the wised-up dreamers

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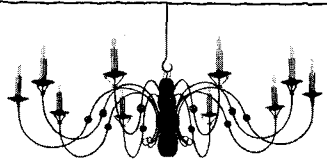

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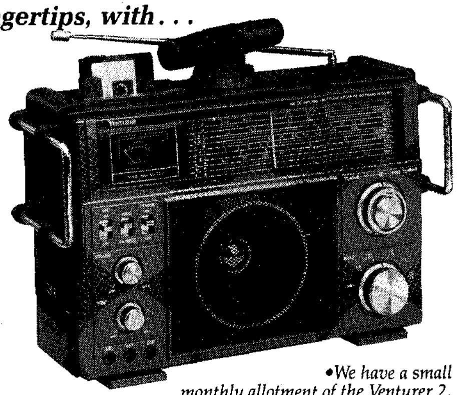
on their way; plow the topsoil until it blows to the ocean; ship out the wheat, ship out the cattle; dig up the earth itself and burn it in power plants and send the power down the line; dismiss the small farmers, empty the little towns; drill the oil and the natural gas and pipe it away; dry up the rivers and the springs, deep-drill for irrigation water as the aquifer retreats. And in return we condense unimaginable amounts of treasure into weapons buried beneath the land that so much treasure came from—weapons for which our best hope might be that we will someday take them apart and throw them away, and for which our next-best hope certainly is that they remain humming away under the prairie, absorbing fear and maintenance, unused, forever.

WHEN I went for long drives on the plains, I might be on the road for weeks at a time. I could afford to stay in motels only every third or fourth night, so the other nights I spent in my van. I slept beneath the mercury lights of highway rest areas where my lone car was visible for six miles in any direction and the inside of the men's room looked as if it had been sandblasted with tiny insects, and on the streets of small towns where the lawn sprinklers ran all night, and next to dammed-up waters of the Missouri River where the white top branches of drowned trees rose above the waves. My van had so many pinholes from rust that it created a planetarium effect on the ground when I turned on the interior light. After a day of driving, there was usually a lot of dust on the bed, and maybe a stunned grasshopper that had come through the open window.

One night, I tried to sleep at a picnic area at the Double Mountain Fork of the Brazos River in Texas, on U.S. Highway 83. This highway runs from Mexico to Canada and is like the Main Street of the Great Plains. Cars went by only occasionally, and that somehow made them scarier. The moon was full, and the wind was blowing harder than during the day. I got up and walked around. By moonlight, I read a historic marker in the picnic area which said that in 1877 hunters brought more than a million buffalo hides to a trading post near this spot. When I lay down again, the unquiet spirits of a million buffalo were abroad in the



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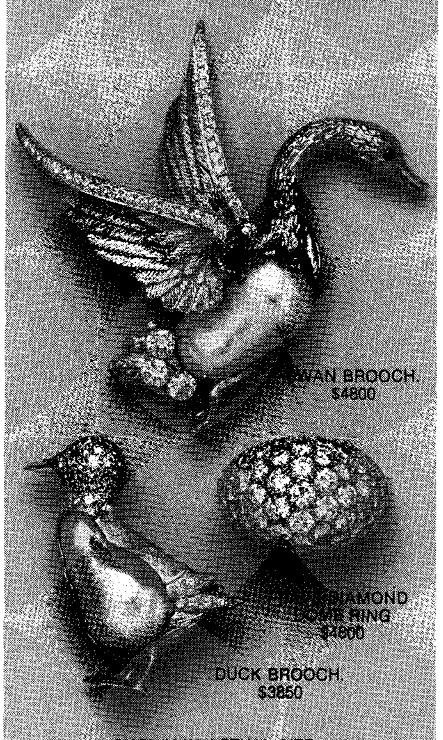

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windy night. My head kept falling through the pillow. The moon shone, the stars blinked, the trees tossed back and forth, the shadows waited under the picnic kiosks. I got up again and drove until dawn.

In New Mexico, I slept well in front of a shuttered vegetable stand on the outskirts of a town. I woke in the morning to blue sky and the sound of small animals playing under my car and scurrying across the roof. On the vegetable stand I saw a sign posted. I went over to see what it said. It said:

PLAGUE
is passed to man by
WILD RODENTS, Rabbits,
and by their FLEAS
. . . Do NOT
Pitch tents or lay
Bedrolls on or near
nests or burrows.
Plague is CURABLE
WHEN TREATED IN TIME

The best places to sleep were truck stops. At two-thirty in the morning, a truck-stop parking lot full of trucks is the capital of sleep. The trucks park in close rows, as if for warmth. The drivers sleep with purposeful intent. The big engines idle; together, the trucks snore. Hinged moisture caps on top of the diesel stacks bounce in the exhaust with a pinging noise. I tried to park as close as I could without being presumptuous. Unlike tourists at rest stops, truck drivers seem careful about slamming doors and gunning engines late at night. Sometimes the truck I had gone to sleep next to would quietly leave and another would quietly pull in. One morning, when I woke up, a semi-trailer full of pickup-truck camper tops had been replaced by a stock truck. On the truck's door, in big letters, a poem:

Buck Hummer
Hog Hauler

In Colorado, Highways 71 and 36 make a big cross on the map when they intersect at the town of Last Chance. Sixty miles to the west, the prairie ends and Greater Denver begins, and the uplands are barnacled with houses for a hundred miles along the Rocky Mountain front. Fewer than seventy people live in Last Chance. The wheat fields are eroding, the oil wells are running dry, the only store in town burned down. "However, hope springs eternally in the breasts of our decreasing high-school enrollment," a citizen of Last Chance wrote recently. Once, on a night of many thunderstorms, I pulled over to sleep at that intersection. The wind made the street light sway, and made its shadows sway inside my van. A full cattle truck came sighing down the road and then squeaked to a stop at the blinking red light. I could hear the animals shifting and bumping inside. They were very likely on their way to one of the largest feedlots in the world, sixty miles north of Denver, where they would stand around with a hundred thousand other cows and eat until they were fat enough to slaughter. The truck sat for a few moments. Then the driver revved the engine and found first gear, and the full load of cattle braced themselves for the start. In step, they set their many feet all at once, like a dance revue.

NOW, when I have trouble getting to sleep, I sometimes imagine that my bed is on the back of a truck driving across the Great Plains. I ignore the shouts on the sidewalk and the bass vibrations from the reggae club across the street. The back of this truck has sides but no top. I can see the stars. The air is cool. The truck will go nonstop for nine hours through the night. At first the road is as straight as a laser—State Highway 8, in North Dakota, say—and nothing seems to move except the wheels under me and the smell of run-over skunks fading in and out in my nose. Then the road twists to follow a river valley, and cottonwood leaves pass above, and someone has been cutting hay, and the air is like the inside of a spice cabinet. Then suddenly the wheels rumble on the wooden planks of a one-lane bridge across the River That Scolds All the Others. Ever since the Great Plains were first called a desert, people have gone a long way toward turning them into one. The Great Plains that I cross in my sleep are bigger than any name people give them. They are enormous, bountiful, unfenced, empty of buildings, full of names and stories. They extend beyond the frame of the photograph. Their hills are hipped, like a woman asleep under a sheet. Their rivers rhyme. Their rows of grain strum past. Their draws hold springwater and wood and game and grass like sugar in the hollow of a hand. They are the place where Crazy Horse will always remain uncaptured. They are the lodge of Crazy Horse. —IAN FRAZIER

(*This is the third part of a three-part article.*)

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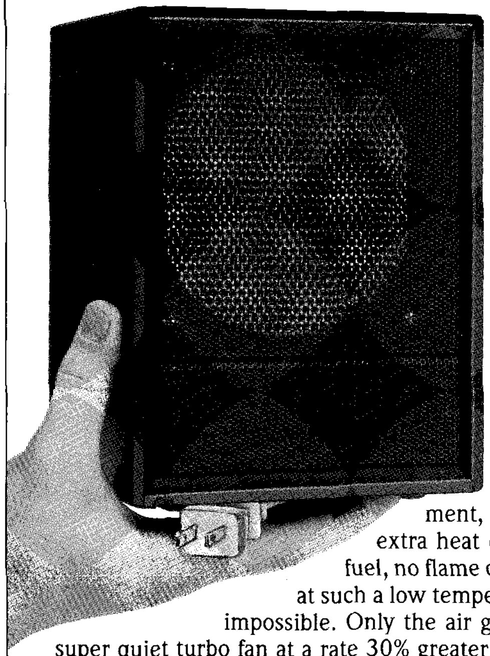

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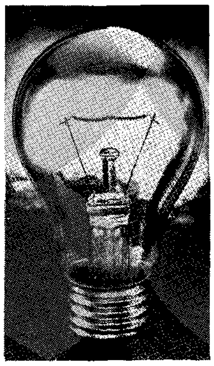

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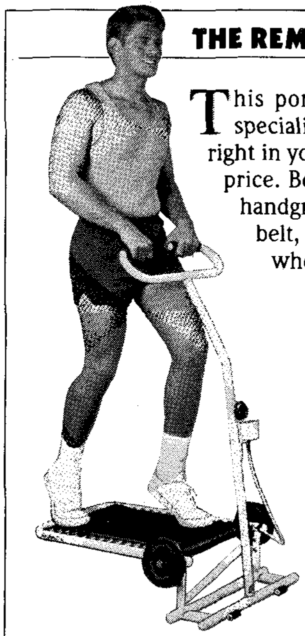

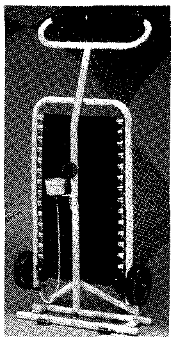

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ANNALS OF TRANSPORTATION

LIGHT RAIL

I Rode the New 42nd Street Trolley!
• *March 6, 1992* •

ONE of the first problems facing anyone trying to bring trolley cars back to the streets of New York is that among today's New Yorkers it's often only Brooklynites in their early forties or older and people who grew up in North Newark who like the idea immediately and think that the trolley's return to, say, Forty-second Street in Manhattan or Sunset Park in Brooklyn—two plans under consideration—could be important to the future of the city. Many younger Manhattanites and younger Brooklynites react blankly to such proposals; some middle-aged Manhattanites, people at least in their mid-fifties, find the idea quaint and a bit frivolous; other Manhattanites this age or older are openly hostile and scornful.

Both the receptive Brooklynites and the former Newark residents have perhaps already heard something about light-rail vehicles—as trolleys are usually called today—and about the techniques that have made contemporary streetcars comfortable, silent, swift, and smooth in accelerating. But it's generally only the receptive Brooklynites who know that such vehicles, which were first developed in the early nineteen-thirties, had their origins in New York City. The streamlined Electric Railway Presidents' Conference Committee, or P.C.C., car—light-rail equipment of a type that spread around the world after the Second World War—was essentially invented and tested in Brooklyn: an old trolley depot near Prospect Park, which has since been rebuilt as a Catholic high school, and some since asphalted-over track running along MacDonald Avenue from the depot site down to Coney Island served as the birthplace of this mode of transportation.

It took thirty engineers and researchers six years to design the first Presidents' Conference Committee cars. The presidents involved, the men who commissioned this new transportation technology, were chief executives of fifty-three companies in the American trolley-car industry—manufacturers and a consortium of private trolley-car operating systems. In 1930, the presidents were collectively looking to invigorate what was one of the biggest businesses in America; that year the industry had assets worth five billion dollars, including ten thousand miles of track, its own electric-power generating systems, large real-estate holdings, and a national fleet of seventy-four thousand streetcars—most of them, by then, already obsolescent. According to historians of civil engineering, the P.C.C. project is a rare instance of a mature industry's completely redesigning its major product. At the time, the redesign was considered both a success and a failure: comprehensively superior technology was developed, but it failed to save the American trolley-car industry.

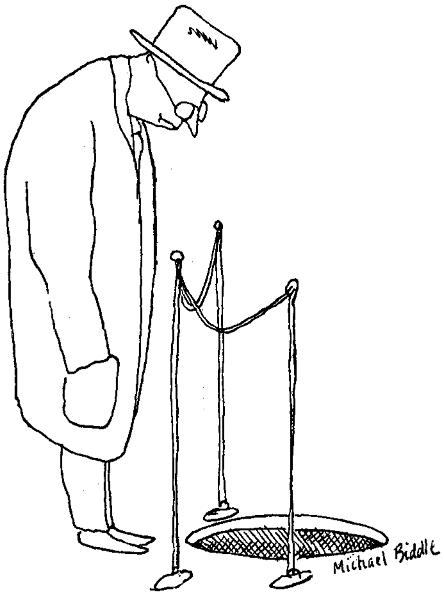
The term "light rail" is newer than much of the existing light-rail technology; it's a bureaucratic coinage of the nineteen-seventies, like "people mover." The term "light-rail transit" refers, technically, to what is called a medium-capacity rail system—one that can carry between two thousand and twenty thousand people an hour at a speed of up to sixty miles an hour. And a "light-rail vehicle," as transportation experts define it, is a "go-anywhere vehicle"; that is, a kind of railroad car that can run down a street in mixed traffic or through a subway tunnel or along an elevated track or on the ground over its own separate right-of-way. Nor is that the limit of its versatility: a light-rail vehicle can operate independently, or several L.R.V.s can be hooked together to form a small train.

According to one explanation of how and when public-transit systems in any given area undergo major change—this is an observation put forward by Samuel P. Katz, a Philadelphia financial consultant, who advises cities on the financing of transportation programs and large-scale construction projects, such as airports, stadiums, and expressways—a new urban mass-transit system can come into being only when three locally determined factors have been aligned: need, willingness, and money. "Need" means that a large number of people see a reason for doing something different. "Willingness" is the word Katz uses to describe joint efforts by a solid, working coalition of interests, such as neighborhood and environmental groups, business leaders, the media, and public officials. To succeed, these efforts usually have to be energized by a powerhouse—someone, or perhaps a few people, willing to keep on pushing everyone else over a period of years until the system is operating. Because mass-transit systems cost tens of millions of dollars at the least, money is frequently seen, from the outset, as the insuperable problem. But money commonly enough becomes available once willingness and need are in place, Katz says.

The older Brooklynites' and former Newark residents' knowledgeability and enthusiasm about trolley cars stem partly from the fact that Brooklyn is the only borough of New York that has ever had a modern trolley system, while Newark is the only city in the New York metropolitan area that both created an early modern light-rail line and has retained it. Brooklyn's system, which was one of the first in the country, lasted twenty years, from 1936 to 1956; it disappeared a year before the Brooklyn Dodgers (at one time the Trolley Dodgers) left for Los Angeles. The Newark City Subway, as Newark's light-rail line is officially known —its unofficial title is Newark's Best-Kept Secret—is a New Deal–era trolley-car line more than four miles long which follows the route of an old canal bed. Since 1952, all Newark subway cars have been Brooklyn-designed light-rail cars. The subway starts out in the basement of Pennsylvania Station in downtown Newark, heads mostly north and east, and comes out of the ground after about a mile to run alongside Branch Brook Park, another well-kept secret—a four-hundred-and-twenty-five-acre city park, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted's sons, that has some three thousand flowering cherry trees, or about the same number that Washington has around its Tidal Basin.

The reason that younger Manhattanites know next to nothing about trolley cars is that except for a line over the Queensboro Bridge, which survived into the nineteen-fifties, all of Manhattan's trolley-car lines were gone by 1947. Half of them, the Green Lines, disappeared more than fifty years ago. The other half, the Red Lines, included some that also ran up through the Bronx and into lower Westchester County, and those were the ones that lasted until 1947. The last run on the Forty-second Street crosstown line, for instance—a run made by growling, jolting, slow-moving, stumpy old pre-First World War red-and-cream convertible cars marked with a big "X" on the front, to distinguish them from the Broadway cars, marked "B," which turned onto Forty-second at Times Square—took place on November 17, 1946. It was a foggy, rainy Sunday morning, old-timers will tell you. The Broadway cars lasted a month longer.

Manhattanites never tasted the new light-rail technology. The Red Lines, a combined bus-and-trolley-car operation officially known as the Third Avenue Railway System, didn't buy any P.C.C. cars, because, by the time they were available, Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia, who boasted that he was "personally and unalterably opposed to streetcars," had informed the company that none of its bus franchises would be renewed unless it agreed to lift all remaining trolley tracks within a few years. In the meantime, the Red Lines made do with home-built cars on the Broadway run (these were bigger, faster cars, but the ride they gave you was still rumbling and somewhat jerky), and used rebuilt cars and secondhand cars on its other lines. Some old convertible cars were still running on Forty-second in 1946—trolleys with rattan seats, bare incandescent light bulbs, and wooden windows that were removed in the summer to let riders catch any passing breezes. The newspaper cartoon featuring the Toonerville Trolley had been making fun of cars like these for a quarter of a century. Brooklyn-Manhattan Transit, which was still an independent company in the thirties, did buy a hundred P.C.C. cars in 1935 and arranged to take delivery of five hundred more, on the basis of a guarantee from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation of a low-interest federal loan to cover seventy per cent of the cost of the larger order, but in 1940 the city took control of the B.M.T., and this second order was cancelled.



In a recent article about the P.C.C. car, Robert G. Lewis, the publishing director of the magazine *Railway Age*, writes that this "standard high-performance streetcar was to the electric railways what the DC-3 was to aviation." And David Gurin, a deputy commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation, asserts in an essay published in 1974 that these "superb trolleys had quicker acceleration than buses, used fuel more efficiently, and rode quietly and fumelessly on smooth welded track." He goes on to say, "They were spacious and comfortable and their wide double doors, close to the ground, allowed quick embarking and disembarking. Bus technology, even today, cannot do better."

Since twenty-four Newark P.C.C. cars are still in daily use less than nine miles from the World Trade Center, and plans call for them to remain in service at least until the mid-nineties, New Yorkers who have never seen one have an opportunity to get acquainted with them by hopping on a PATH train to downtown Newark—a twenty-minute trip that lets you off just upstairs from the terminal of the Newark Subway. The subway, with a weekday ridership of fourteen thousand, is in much better shape than the B.M.T. trolley lines that accepted delivery of the first P.C.C. cars, because New Jersey Transit, the state agency that took over the management of the Newark Subway eight years ago, has just spent twenty million dollars on subway work, laying new, welded track and rebuilding and relighting all the stations, in consequence of which the subway has become what New Jersey Transit officials like to call "the safest of all our New Jersey operations." As part of this project, New Jersey Transit has also completely overhauled the P.C.C. cars; they have new wheels, new brakes, new paint, and even new blue upholstery, and all this makes them, in the words of Anthony Grazi-

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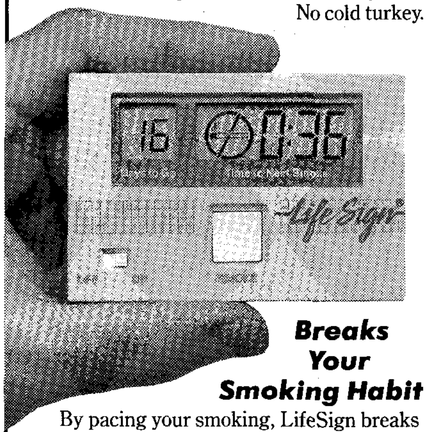

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oso, a recent director of public relations for New Jersey Transit, "as nice as a living room."

To get to the subway from the PATH train, you go downstairs through Newark's Penn Station, a massive and heavily used Art Deco structure that was finished in 1937 and turned out to be the last major building designed by the architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White, whose works included the Columbia University campus and two now demolished masterpieces—New York's original Penn Station and second Madison Square Garden. Newark's Penn Station was built to provide a linking-up point—to make it easy to step off a New York–Washington express train or a New Jersey commuter train or a surface-level Newark trolley car and get right on the brand-new subway, which was intended to run all the way to Paterson, ten miles north of the Newark city line.

Newark's surface-level trolley cars were replaced by buses years ago, and its subway still turns around at the Newark city line, but its Penn Station continues to function as a vital hub. And since New Jersey Transit recently spent fifteen million dollars refurbishing the station—a job that included sprucing up its concourse-level shops (back in the nineteen-fifties, North Newarkites would take the subway downtown on weekends with their kids just to have lunch at Penn Station)—you can pick up a cappuccino to go as you head down to the subway.

A first flight of stairs leads to a bright, spotless vestibule that seems almost carpeted with the soft wall-to-wall smell—part buttered popcorn, part steam heat—that belongs to newly applied floor polish. A second flight, at the far end of the vestibule, takes you down to a high-ceilinged tiled waiting room with a bench and, out in the middle of the concrete floor, a single railroad track. And soon, from your left, comes a commanding howl—the wheels of a P.C.C. car making a tight turn in an enclosed, tiled space—and a rounded shape with a single headlight hurtles toward you, glides to a stop, and opens its doors to reveal chrome poles, blue upholstery, and warm yellow light within.

Gleaming black and white on the outside, killer-whale colors, with a hooded, raked, split windshield; square windows surmounted by small oval eyebrow windows; along its flanks, slashing diagonal stripes of burnt orange, magenta, and lavender (the somewhat startling new livery of New Jersey Transit); and a trolley pole angling up and away from the back of the curved roof to an overhead electric line: this is the Presidents' Conference Committee car, a living Art Deco artifact, like the railroad station above it. And the many innovations represented by this locally designed vehicle have swept across North America in two great, slow waves half a century apart. Smooth, sleek, and elegant in its trimly curved wrapper, the P.C.C. car seems to move through the Newark subway station without any effort at all.

IN 1930, when the P.C.C. project got under way, most American streetcars were cumbersome, clanking creatures. The American electric streetcar had been a makeshift vehicle ever since its début, in the late eighteen-eighties. Any designing involved in the earliest cars, as Lewis, of *Railway Age*, likes to explain it, was primarily a matter of putting various pieces of existing equipment together, so that a diminutive horsecar could now move down a track without a horse. Subsequent improvements, Lewis says, could best be described as patches and tinkerings that tweaked the state of the art forward so that every few years streetcars got a little bigger and a little faster. By 1930, a few of the newer interurbans, like the Red Devils, running between Cincinnati and Lake Erie, and the Brill Bullets, used for Philadelphia's suburban service, were high-speed cars; in fact, the aerodynamically designed aluminum Bullets, which are still in service on the Upper Darby–Norristown line, west of Philadelphia, have been clocked at a top speed of a hundred miles an hour, and can still hit eighty on a good piece of track. On a test run in Ohio, back in the thirties, a Red Devil went a hundred and twenty-seven miles an hour and beat an airplane in a race. But more than half of the American streetcar fleet in 1930 was still both slow-moving (twenty-five miles an hour at best) and, as the Presidents' Conference Committee chairman reported, "excessively noisy, obsolete in appearance, and not calculated to stimulate riding or turn a profit."

The Presidents' Conference Committee decided that it could discharge its function only if it could be precise about every one of the factors in a trolley-car ride that can "stimulate riding." As the transportation writers Seymour Kashin and Harre Demoro point out in their book "An American Original: The PCC Car," the committee's decision to return to first principles produced "the single most important technological innovation in the urban transportation industry since electrification." Some factors were already known, one being that urban trolley cars had to stop at street corners, wait for traffic lights, and share streets with cars and trucks. This meant that they didn't need high speeds so much as they needed the ability to maintain a high average speed; that is, they needed to be able to take advantage of every break in the traffic by accelerating rapidly and braking quickly. Urban trolley cars also needed ruggedness and reliability.

The committee members decided that other ride factors would come to light only if they applied what their chairman, Dr. Thomas Conway, Jr., who was an economist turned railroad man, called "the scientific method of attack . . . which has produced such remarkable results in other industries." As president of two interurban lines, in Ohio and Pennsylvania, Conway had been the force behind both the Bullets and the Red Devils, and knew from his own business dealings how valuable careful research could be: elaborate wind-tunnel tests by a professor of aeronautics had demonstrated to him back in the twenties that the streamlined shape of the Bullets made them forty per cent cheaper to run at high speeds than conventional interurban cars. Conway now wanted to assemble a team of researchers who would look at anything that might lead to something worthwhile for trolley-car passengers. One of the committee's research groups devised, in passing, the first self-tapping screw—a screw that bites into metal instead of wood—and the committee decided not to patent the new screw but to present the device to the American public as a gift.

As part of its research program, the committee commissioned two studies—one at the University of Michigan, the other at Purdue—on "the effects of movement on human bodies." In one experiment, a woman wearing high heels and fitted with a protective harness stood on a moving platform clutching a handrail while the platform was run at different speeds and rates of acceleration. The researchers were surprised to discover that it wasn't travelling at any particular speed that made people feel comfortable and secure on trolley cars; it was a smooth ride at all speeds—a ride without perceptible vibration, swaying, tilting, or what were felt to be sudden changes in either speed or direction. It also turned out that a lurching, jerky ride would throw standing men passengers even more violently off balance than it threw standing women passengers wearing high heels: the women could react more readily to sudden movement because they were already on their toes.

Taken together with what was already known, these experiments produced new performance criteria for trolley cars; the committee now understood, for instance, that the car it wanted should be able to accelerate and decelerate faster than older cars but should be felt to have practically no acceleration or deceleration—in fact, no motion of any kind. And this could be accomplished only if the designers began a process of multicomponent redesign, which meant simultaneously redesigning the streetcars' motors, their brakes, their wheels, their trucks (the frames holding the wheels), and their seats. The wheels and the trucks were involved because most of the vibration felt inside older cars was the result of a metal-to-metal path: the wheels, which ground down on and pounded the rails, were directly attached to the trucks, and the trucks were bolted to the cars, with the result that, as Kashin and Demoro put it, "the typical streetcar truck was an excellent transmitter of noise and vibration to the car interior." Nor did the hard wooden seats of the older cars do much to insulate people from the vibrations coming through the floor. P.C.C. cars would be stuffed with insulation—from seven to eight hundred pounds of rubber per car—and P.C.C. wheels would have some resilience and give, because, instead of being all steel, they would be a kind of steel-rubber-steel sandwich. P.C.C. trucks would have rubber springs. And, in addition, a P.C.C. seat would have springs like those of an easy chair, and would be covered with soft cushions and fabric.

The committee took its new performance criteria to major trolley-car manufacturers and suppliers. Both General Electric and Westinghouse worked on the acceleration problem, and both developed motors that in ten seconds could accelerate almost imperceptibly from a standstill to forty-five miles an hour. This surpassed the performance not only of the best existing trolley cars but also of the best automobiles of the day. Modern autos have, in fact, only recently overtaken the P.C.C.s: a car today can accelerate from zero to sixty in ten seconds, but cars with that ability didn't become widely available until the nineteen-eighties.

Old streetcars had only two running speeds—half ahead and full ahead—and six intermediate acceleration speeds, each of which lasted a second or two; in other words, a jerky ride was built into the mechanism, even when the car was, as Kashin and Demoro note, "under the guidance of a veteran, skilled motorman." P.C.C. accelerators had ninety-nine acceleration speeds, which provided such a blend that even a novice motorman could offer a ride as smooth as eggnog. Other design changes effectively reclassified the P.C.C. motorman as a white-collar worker. The motorman on an old streetcar, who used hand controls to guide the cars, was expected to stand while the car moved through heavy traffic, and had a round wooden fold-down stool to perch on during off-peak hours. On a P.C.C. car, the operator sat in a comfortable armchair in front of a desklike dashboard and used only his feet to drive the car, leaving his hands free for paperwork, such as handing out transfers.

Fewer than five thousand P.C.C.s were ever built in the United States (almost all of them in the nineteen-thirties and forties), and in the nine-

"Would it strain our relationship if I asked you to check my closet for supernatural phenomena?"

• •

teen-fifties the P.C.C. car became, without anyone's realizing that this was the beginning of a postindustrial pattern, one of the first great technological successes that this country let slip away. In the decades after the Second World War, European, Australian, and Asian manufacturers produced tens of thousands of P.C.C.s for the world market. Tatra, in Czechoslovakia, for instance, has built more than twenty-one thousand P.C.C.s, and is still turning them out. Tatra-built P.C.C.s can be found as far away as Egypt, and they are the principal surface-transportation vehicle on the streets of two hundred cities in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

But now, in the nineteen-eighties, the P.C.C.'s influence is again spreading across North America, this time from west to east: a new generation of modern European, Canadian, and Japanese light-rail equipment—boxier-looking than the P.C.C., and with bigger windows, but designed to provide the same smoothly accelerating, quiet ride—is currently in service on a series of popular new urban and interurban light-rail systems in and around half a dozen highway-oriented Western cities, which abandoned trolley-car operations thirty or forty years ago. The first of these new lines, in Edmonton, opened in 1978, and was followed three years later by one in Calgary and one running from San Diego down to the Mexican border—a line known locally as the Tijuana Trolley. In Oregon, MAX, a fifteen-mile-long light-rail line that connects downtown Portland with Gresham, the fourth-largest city in the state, opened in 1986 and now carries nineteen thousand commuters and shoppers a day—nearly double the ridership that had been projected. In California, two more light-rail systems—a Sacramento line, and a Silicon Valley line centered on San Jose—began operations in 1987. The three outermost stops of RT Metro, the Sacramento line, are built on land that was originally set aside for a freeway. "Overnight, Sacramento feels more like a major city," a Sacramento *Bee* editorial declared after the system opened.

Most of the first national media coverage of the new light-rail lines has focussed on San Diego, whose mayor, Maureen O'Connor, is now sought out by network news broadcasters for her comments on the cost-effectiveness and congestion-dissolving properties of trolleys. In a recent "60 Minutes" interview with Harry Reasoner, she said, "The only problem now, Harry, is we can't get them into the neighborhoods fast enough. . . . In the South Bay area, there's no question, if we *didn't* have a trolley there'd be gridlock. . . . People *are* giving up their second cars, and they're commuting to work on the trolleys . . . not just the senior citizens and the low-income households but the professionals as well. . . . Bottom line, not only they're good for the city, and they're cheap: they're fun."

Some of the nation's biggest cities—Los Angeles, Seattle, Denver, Dallas, Houston, St. Louis, Minneapolis, Baltimore—are now building or planning to build light-rail lines, and right across the Hudson River a fifteen-mile-long light-rail line now being designed by New Jersey Transit will run north from Hoboken between the riverbank and the foot of the Palisades. Design of a twenty-seven-mile Baltimore line was begun in December of 1987, and regular service is expected by the end of 1991. In addition, half a dozen North American cities that have never stopped using P.C.C.s—San Francisco, Toronto, Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland—began buying new-generation light-rail cars a few years ago to supplant or supplement their old ones.

Now that these late-model light-rail vehicles are turning up in more and more places, if you want to be sure of getting a vintage P.C.C. when you take a trolley ride in North America you have a choice of going to Mexico City or climbing aboard the Newark Subway. The fare on the Newark Subway is ninety cents, exact change only, for a trip to the end of the line. On a P.C.C. car, everything happens right away. Standing at the back of a large crowd of homeward-bound Newarkites in the subway terminal recently, I was surprised to see how rapidly our group was being swallowed up by the car that had just pulled in and opened its doors. There was very little milling around and next to no shoving: boarding was essentially a matter of walking forward at a normal gait and taking a place inside.

Only then, for the first time, did I

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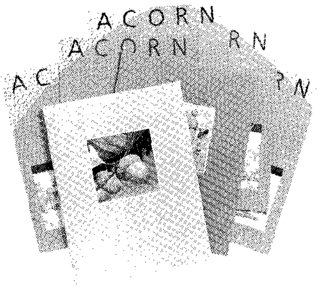

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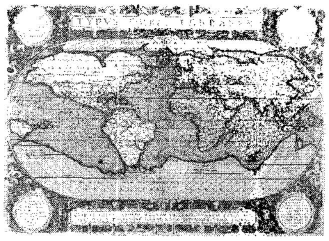

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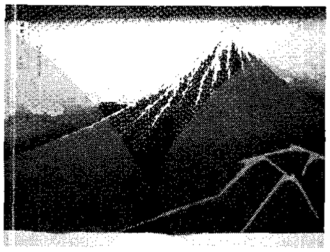

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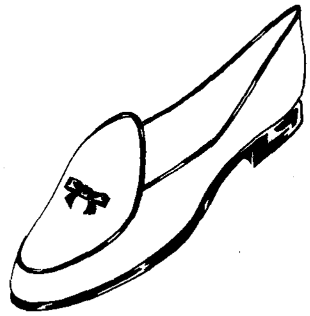

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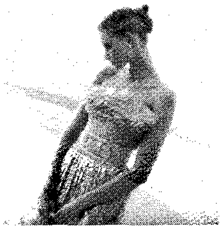

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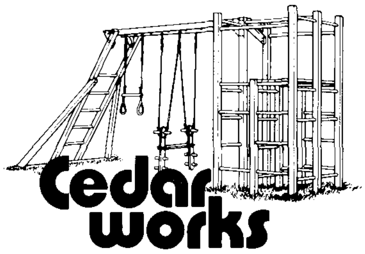

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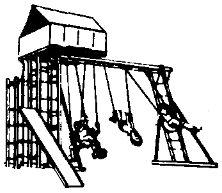

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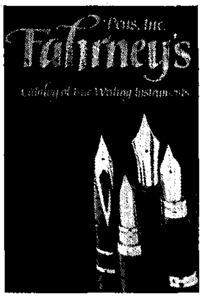

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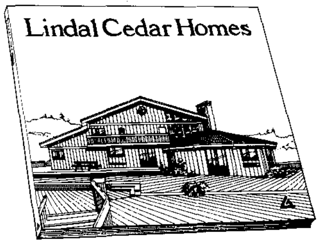

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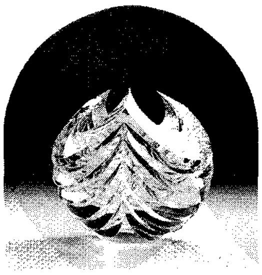

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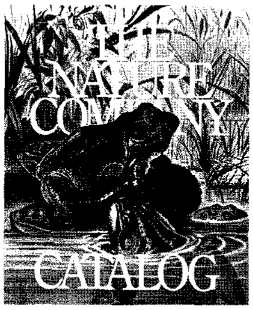

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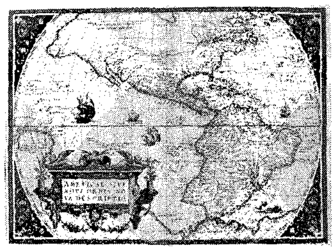

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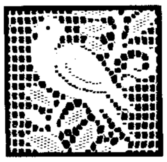

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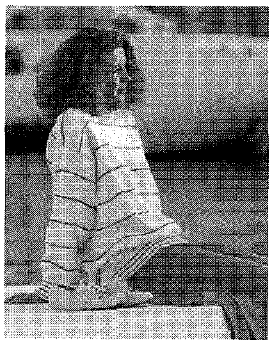

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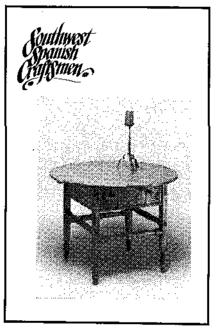

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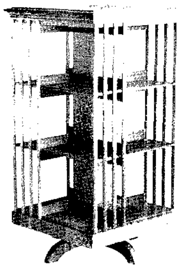

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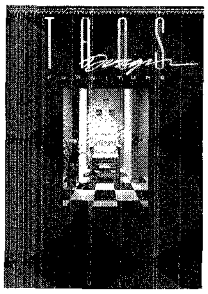

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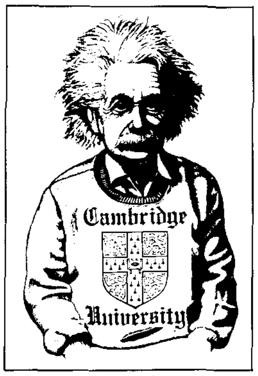

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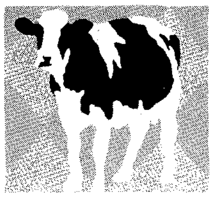

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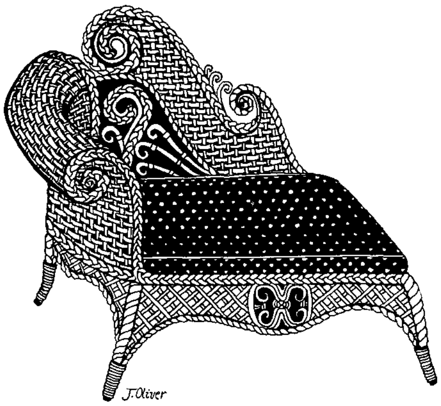
take in the fact that the doors on the P.C.C.—there are two—are double-width doors, so two people walking abreast can enter at the same time. New York City's buses—there are now thirty-seven hundred of them—have doors, front and rear, so narrow that people have to get on and off single file. Thanks to the P.C.C.s' double doors, loading and unloading people at any one of the stations along the Newark Subway requires only half the time a bus needs to take on and discharge passengers—perhaps even less than half the time, for the steps on a P.C.C. are low and easy to use, while the high steps on a modern city bus often require hopping, leaping, or hand-over-hand hauling up. And because, in addition to its wide doors and low steps, a P.C.C. has exceptionally smooth acceleration and braking, the entire sequence of pulling into the station, stopping, waiting, and getting under way again on the Newark Subway is a more fluid transaction and a less noticeable event than time spent at a bus stop. There isn't a lot of standing around while people get on and off, and feeling that time is passing uncontrollably, or of glaring at what seems to be everyone else's slowness and clumsiness. And, of course, at the subway terminal in Newark cars can load four times as fast as any New York City bus of the nineteen-seventies or eighties. During rush hours on the Newark subway, there is a car every two minutes, and hardly any waiting around between loadings. This level of frequency ("A trolley always in sight," as a slogan coined by the early streetcar companies put it) makes a trolley-car trip like walking—something you can choose to do at any moment, without thinking about it ahead of time.

I TOOK a Newark Subway ride recently with Elizabeth Del Tufo, a North Newarkite from the grand old neighborhood of Forest Hill, a large area of crenellated mansions and shady streets, who is the director of the Newark Boys Chorus School, a grade school modelled on the Vienna Boys Choir, and also serves as the president of the Newark Preservation and Landmarks Committee. Mrs. Del Tufo, an animated and resolute woman with curly blond hair, took me to the end of the line, pointed out that only one station had any graffiti (at Park Avenue, and it was only a small scrawl), and then walked me a block north of a bus plaza at the last stop, Franklin Avenue, so we could have lunch at another old North Newark institution, Kielb's, in the middle of a small, self-contained neighborhood with a liquor store, a fruit-and-vegetable store, and a good Italian deli.

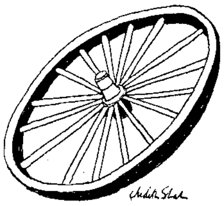
Mrs. Del Tufo was quick to talk about how the continued existence of a nineteen-thirties trolley-car line could contribute to the preservation of adjacent communities in the nineteen-eighties. "The subway is an unbelievable asset—a civilizing presence," she said over coffee and sandwiches. "It's a backbone that has helped to keep North Newark and Forest Hill from deteriorating. In a recent reversal of the old Newark middle-class pattern, many North Newarkites today work outside the city but live in town, and the subway, a clean, safe, reliable link to New York as well as to downtown, makes this possible. Forest Hill never panicked, in part because its ties to the world remained stable, in part because it is itself relatively isolated geographically. There's Branch Brook Park on one side, and only two streets running into the neighborhood on the other side. Many people stayed put simply because they didn't see decay around them or on the trolley-car trip to work. Now there's an infusion of new blood. People from New York City began buying on the Hill several years ago, and the largely Italian area around the subway tracks has been bolstered by Portuguese families who are outgrowing crowded quarters in the Ironbound"—a bustling neighborhood adjacent to Penn Station. "And the subway is one of the selling points that local real-estate agents always bring up immediately. Subway linkages and spinoffs are starting to get the attention of people all over the city. The universities are interested in a new subway stop in their area. There's also talk of extending the subway down to Newark Airport, and the mayor's office is thinking about the possibility of building new middle-income housing along the subway right-of-way. Landmarks people in many areas are interested in preserving things for historical reasons, but in Newark my interest in our charming and pretty trolley-car system stems from the work it keeps doing to help preserve *us*, to help *us* redevelop."



RETURNING to New York, I began to wonder why people in Manhattan who had never liked trolley cars could still get alarmed about the possibility of their return and start trying to argue it away. I went for help to some retired New York Transit Authority traffic managers with long memories—men who had had to deal with the issue of Manhattan trolley cars early in their careers. Putting together what they told me, I think I can now understand that the smoldering feelings some Manhattanites have about trolleys are, to some extent, at least, the complicated residue of such matters as the long-lasting nickel fare and its consequences; the shadows of the old elevated trains; and the personal prejudices of two New York City mayors—dramas that played themselves out over the course of some forty years, beginning in the middle of the First World War.

The nickel-fare story is the simplest: a number of the early trolley-car companies in New York—those chartered before 1898—operated under perpetual state franchises stipulating that the fare would be set at a nickel: almost a middle-class fare, actually, at the turn of the century, when butter cost a nickel a pound. As long as operating costs stayed somewhere near late-nineteenth-century levels, the right to charge no less than a nickel guaranteed tremendous profits to trolley-car investors. But the First World War unexpectedly brought sharp inflation to the country—labor costs went up fifty per cent between 1916 and 1919—and under these changed circumstances the continuing legal obligation to charge no more than a nickel guaranteed bankruptcy after only a few years. The result was that some lines cut back on maintenance, and the cars aged more rapidly than they had to; some lines began watering their stock to protect their directors; and some lines, as early as the early nineteen-twenties, began looking for ways to surrender their nineteenth-century franchises—perhaps by replacing deteriorating nickel trolley cars with brand-new ten-cent buses.

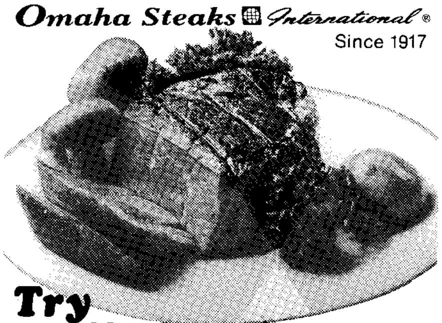
In the thirties, the transit companies that operated New York's elevated lines—a late-nineteenth-century invention, like the electric trolley car—also cut back on modernization efforts, because they confidently expected that in only a few years' time the Els would be completely replaced by subway lines. The noisy, hulking Els, which loomed along densely packed and often quite narrow streets, were already hated as a kind of half-baked device that had been implemented before it had been perfected, and that was as much an intrusion into people's lives as it was a convenience. The new subway lines made the Els seem like an antiquated nuisance that would shortly disappear, as horsecars and cable cars already had, and the prematurely aging trolleys began to get hooked together in many people's minds with the Els.



If you want to know why New York's nineteenth-century Els were detested, one of the retired traffic managers told me, you don't need a history book; the experience is directly available. More than three decades after the trolley lines were swept away, a couple of El lines that date back to the late eighteen-eighties and early eighteen-nineties are still in service in New York as segments of the subway system: the Broadway line in northeast Brooklyn and, branching off from it, the northern half of the Myrtle Avenue line, running up to Queens. Just get on an M train headed for Williamsburg, the traffic manager said, and a ten-minute ride to the first stop over the Williamsburg Bridge will put you in touch with a century-old and still simmering resentment. There has been some twentieth-century rebuilding on both surviving El lines, he went on, but the effect they generate hasn't changed much since dignitaries put on top hats to climb aboard the inaugural specials for the two lines' opening-day ceremonies.

The first stop in Williamsburg on the Broadway line is Marcy Avenue, and the outer wall of the station there is barely six feet from the buildings that stand next to it—you could almost shake hands with people in the third-floor windows of the brick row houses and tenements crowded along Broadway, a main commercial strip no wider than a Manhattan side street. There's plenty of activity on Broadway down below the station—a newsstand, a lunch counter, a beauty salon, a fish market, a men's clothing store, two shoe stores, and even, a couple of blocks away, a movie theatre—but sunshine hitting the area stays up at the fourth-floor level and above. Elevated service first reached this stretch of Broadway in the last week of June, 1888. If you stand below the El today near Marcy Avenue and look across the darkened street at the shops on the other side of Broadway, it's hard to know at first just how far away they are: the gloom seems to shrink the width of the street, but you hear two different kinds of noise, one constant and one intermittent, which have the counteracting effect of making everything on the far side of the street seem harder to reach, almost as if the air under the El had been thickened by sound. The constant noise is the sound of heavy street traffic doubled, and even tripled, in intensity as the racket and the honking of cars, buses, and trucks along Broadway bounce back at you from both the buildings nearby and the underside of the El structure overhead. And when, every few minutes or so, a train goes by on the El above, you seem to hear, see, and touch noise, because the banging, shrieking, roaring, clanking, rumbling, and sighing up above pass over you like a shadow and make the buildings on Broadway tremble, and at the same time move down through you with a shudder.

New Yorkers who disliked trolley cars were also encouraged by the strongly expressed opinions of two forceful New York City mayors, who, for reasons of their own, denounced the trolleys during five separate administrations over a span of almost three decades. Mayor John F. Hylan (who served two terms, from 1918 to 1925) called the trolleys "useless junk" and equated them with the Els, because, as a young civil engineer, he had been fired by the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company for running a train through a red signal—wrongfully dismissed, he always said. The B.R.T., which was



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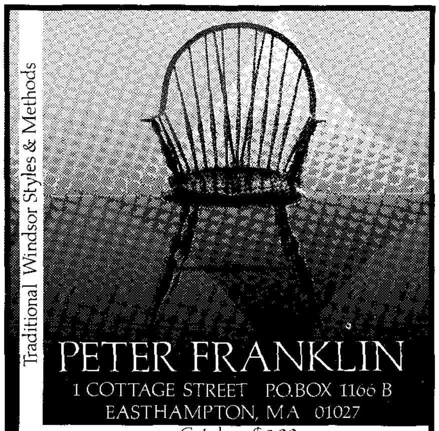

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the predecessor of the B.M.T., operated all the Els and trolleys in Brooklyn. During Hylan's second term as mayor, the idea of converting trolleys to buses became official city policy for the first time.

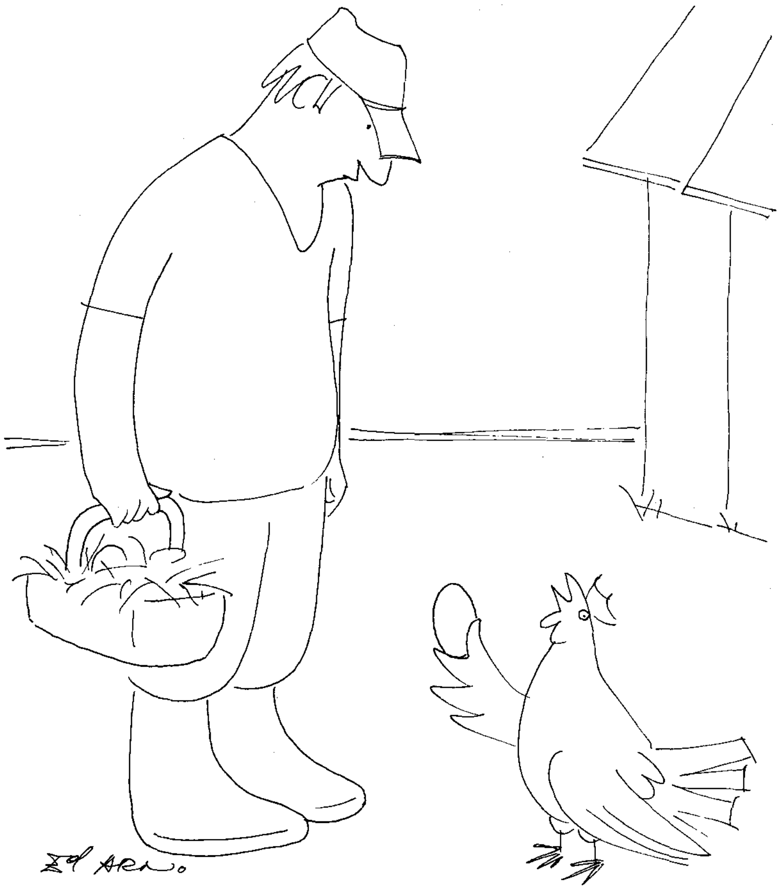
Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, who served from 1934 to 1945, always seemed to take a special pleasure in the demise of any trolley line. "Trolleys are as dead as sailing ships," he said in tones of real accomplishment a few days before the Madison Avenue streetcars were converted to buses, in early 1935. A story often told about LaGuardia during his mayoralty had it that he started disliking trolleys after a fire engine he was riding on arrived late at a bad fire because it had spent ten minutes stuck in traffic behind a lumbering trolley car. But that story is just a story, and LaGuardia's hostility to trolleys may actually have had more to do with his own personal need, as a son of immigrant parents, to define himself as a modern American. According to an assessment of the LaGuardia years first put forward by Jane Jacobs, in David Gurin's article "Trolley Transit in New York," "LaGuardia's idea of progressive city planning may have inflicted more damage on New York than graft or corporate manipulations. He banned organ grinders from the sidewalks and ended the extensive outdoor street markets. He seemed to dislike anything that smacked of the old world or of immigrant life."

IN the last few years, many New Yorkers—those who like trolley cars, those who don't, and even those who are indifferent—have had to start thinking more seriously about transportation issues, because New York's streets now seem to have too much traffic, composed of too many different kinds of vehicles: private cars, vans, delivery trucks, semis, trucks pulling advertisements, garbage trucks, fire engines, ambulances, police vehicles, city buses, express buses, school buses, radio cabs, other yellow cabs, gypsy cabs, limousines, stretch limos, and seven thousand weaving and twisting messenger-service bicycles.

In 1948, three hundred and thirty-five thousand motorized vehicles—cars, trucks, and buses—drove into Manhattan every business day. In 1987, eight hundred and eighty-five thousand vehicles made the same journey. That puts the street system close to capacity, the best guess being that island-spanning gridlock—a word coined in the late seventies—would result if a million vehicles tried to come into Manhattan the same morning. And all this traffic is unpredictably impeded by collisions, by double and triple parkers, by abandoned cars, by bridge and highway repairs, by water-main breaks, by overloaded tunnels and blocked intersections. Because in these stop-and-start circumstances no driver can establish a rhythm or a speed that feels natural, some drivers suddenly gun their motors to leap through a ten-foot opening even though there's a red light at the next corner, and others run red lights or jump lanes crazily: it's an environment drenched with acceleration and drained of speed. The average speed on a north-south avenue is less than ten miles an hour; on a cross street, it's five and a half miles an hour.

At the same time, the traffic seems to have been almost engulfed by too many activities that have either claimed space on the street or been kicked into it: twenty-story-high construction cranes, parked mobile homes full of construction managers, grotto-like building scaffolding, food venders, newspaper boxes, the homeless. And makeshift nineteen-eighties security measures have hardened and harshened the atmosphere of the streets: stores have armored their front doors with intense, blinding spotlights, locked their side doors, and thrown steel gates over their display windows; and any block that has cars parked on it is subjected at all hours to the screams of car alarms, which are often so crudely designed that they can be activated by the vibrations of a passing truck.

For anyone trying to bring modern trolley cars back to the streets of New York, the state of the streets is a plus, like the enthusiasm of Brooklynites, because now something has to be done: the streets we have can't be widened much, if at all, and there's no room left in Manhattan for any new streets. But even if we could double the number of streets, we would still need to cut back on the number of vehicles in the city, because their total generates levels of ozone and carbon monoxide that make the city a major violator of the federal Clean Air Act. According to a recent study prepared for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority by Ximena de la Barra Mac Donald, an architect who teaches public-health and planning courses at Columbia University, the pollution generated by New York traffic poses a complex and continuing threat to the health of many



"Will there be anything else?"

New Yorkers. The carbon monoxide in the air, for instance, puts healthy New York nonsmokers at some health risk for at least half of every year. For healthy New York smokers the carbon-monoxide health risk is a part of daily life.

There's another plus these days for trolley-car promoters: research suggesting that the mode of transportation people use may affect their health and the health of people around them, or even their own and their neighbors' sense of community obligation. And this work, scattered and fragmentary though much of it still is, may provide a new context for people's thinking about transportation.

A pioneering study in this area, Donald Appleyard's 1970 Street Livability Study, in San Francisco, which is summarized in his book "Livable Streets," made the astonishing discovery that a sudden large increase in the volume of traffic through an area affects the life of people who have to live there almost exactly the way that a sudden increase in the crime rate would. Appleyard, an urban designer who was then teaching at the University of California at Berkeley, was able to observe this by finding three blocks of town houses which looked remarkably similar and had very much the same kind of middle-class and working-class residents—Italians, for the most part, with a growing Oriental minority. The principal differences were that only two thousand cars a day ran down Octavia Street, or "LIGHT TRAFFIC street," as he called it, while Gough Street—"MEDIUM street," in his terminology—got more than eight thousand cars, and Franklin Street, which he referred to as "HEAVY street," was used by almost sixteen thousand cars every day and had almost as many vehicles during a peak hour as Octavia Street had in a twenty-four-hour period.

Heavy traffic brought with it danger, noise, vibrations, fumes, and soot directly and trash secondarily; that is, the cars didn't bring the trash, or much trash, themselves, but their presence meant that when trash did accumulate on Franklin Street residents of the block more often than not just let it sit there. The cars, Appleyard was able to determine, had truncated the amount of territory that residents held themselves responsible for. Many of them, he reported, struggled to love their block, but "the constant noise and intrusion were a persistent intrusion into the home and ruined any feeling of peace or solitude," and as a result many residents felt that their block had disowned them. Residents of Octavia Street, with its two thousand cars a day, told Appleyard, "I tend the sidewalk trees outside the house and the rose bushes in the front," and "I like our little street, even though I am not a homeowner," and "I keep it clean of debris, pick up broken bottles, notify people of anything wrong," and "At least ten people take care of the street," and "People sit on front steps and chat, visit other people. It's a comforting block. I feel a sense of responsibility," and "I feel my home extends to the *whole block*." One woman on Octavia told Appleyard enthusiastically that street life wasn't an intrusion into her house—that "only happiness enters in."

Interviews on Franklin Street, the sixteen-thousand-car-a-day street, went very differently: "Do you think of this street as your real home where you belong?—Definitely not. It's hard to say where we feel our home is," and "Where do you feel your home extends to?—Just this apartment, not even that." Many Franklin Street residents covered their front windows and doors with grilles and grates and spent most of their at-home time in the backs of their houses. ("Since they put on the new buses, you can't conduct a conversation in the dining room," a Franklin Streeter told a reporter from the San Francisco Sunday *Examiner & Chronicle* who was writing a piece about the Street Livability Study. "To hear what's being said, you have to scootch your chair right up to the table. The noise has almost taken away the use of two rooms from us.") And a Franklin Street resident who refused to be intimidated and still went for a walk every day told Appleyard, "It's so noisy it just ruins the reason you're walking. You want to look at a tree and somehow you can't." Appleyard also learned that all the families with children had moved away

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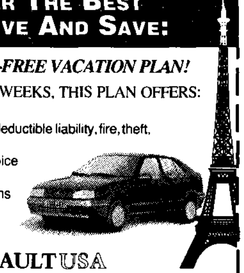

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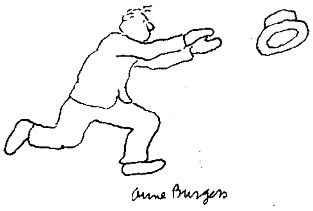
from Franklin Street before he arrived.

Octavia Street inhabitants, Appleyard wrote in "Livable Streets," had three times as many friends on their block and twice as many acquaintances as the people on Franklin. "There was very little social interaction" on Franklin, he found. "Residents had few if any friends there." The sense of loneliness on Franklin "came out very clearly, especially in the responses of the elderly," he reported. " 'It's not a friendly street—no one offers help.' "



Of life on Gough Street—the "MEDIUM street," where traffic had been increasing for the past few years—Appleyard wrote, "There was a feeling that the old community was on the point of extinction: 'It used to be friendly; what was outside has now withdrawn into the buildings. People are preoccupied with their own lives.' " He concluded that "families were in the course of leaving" Gough. "Those who remained expressed deep regrets at the demise of their community."

While Donald Appleyard's Street Livability Study still awaits a follow-up study of comparable thoroughness examining the traffic impact that other forms of transportation have on the lives of communities, several recent studies have looked at what might be called the user impact—that is, the effects that getting around by different means of transportation may have on people, not only while they're driving a car or riding in public transit but also subsequently and cumulatively.

In this newer research, trolley cars have been receiving considerable attention. Lorne Cappe, an urban designer with the Toronto Planning and Development Department, has announced, in a new essay called "Including Transit," that "the time has come" for "transit authorities, city officials, and planners to recognize the importance of transit riders to the health of cities and to begin treating them with the sensitivity they deserve." Cappe goes on, "Riders' experiences, as well as the experiences of those living and working along transit routes, are essential components of a transit network design that combines efficiency with experiential quality." It's a lesson, he says, that anyone who lives in a Toronto streetcar neighborhood begins to pick up: "If, as is commonly believed, the retail strips are the heart and soul of Toronto's ethnic neighborhoods, the streetcar can be considered the circulatory system that maintains the street's vitality." And that is because "surface transit passengers observe and interact with other citizens"—other passengers and people out on the street—with an intensity of "sociability" not afforded to motorists, or even, in some respects, to pedestrians: "Transit riders are . . . free to observe others, to look out the window, or to be totally oblivious to their surroundings, unlike pedestrians, who must at the very least watch where they are walking. The freedom to concentrate on activities visible from the transit window allows the rider more opportunities to experience the special characteristics of the city as he or she passes through it. As an internal environment, mass transit provides an extra dimension to the urban dweller's perceptual and social world."

In transit vehicles, with their "large interior spaces with often lively, constantly changing environments . . . the coming and going of people inside the car competes with the passing streetscape for the rider's attention," Cappe writes. "The rider is therefore offered the choice of concentrating on interior or exterior situations." In the essay's final section, "Enhancing the Rider's Experience of the City," Cappe hammers home his message by pointing out how the special experiences that transit riders look for can exist only if they are built into the transit vehicle itself, and he outlines some of the performance criteria that a new kind of design review will need to take into account: "Comfort, sociability, accessibility, and views are important elements of transit vehicle design. The color, length, height, overall size, and fenestration of vehicles will affect the way they serve riders and street users alike and the way they will eventually fit into the city."

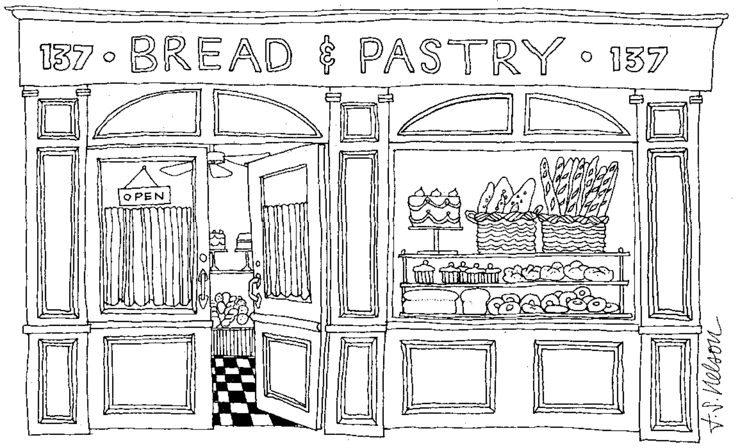
The American anthropologist Edward T. Hall is even more specific about the components of sociable transit-vehicle design. For instance, he writes in a study commissioned by the modern interurban BART system, in the San Francisco Bay Area, interaction on crowded light-rail cars can be enhanced by placing the seating so that people can arrange themselves in groups but are not forced to stare straight at other people—because, he explains, if you can't avoid a stare you feel intruded upon. And Ulrich Pfeiffer, a West German economist and urban expert, working with his wife, the American urban-design analyst Toni Sachs Pfeiffer, is equally specific about the benefits that communities can derive from properly laid-out trolley-car systems. "Trolley cars open up cities for people," the Pfeiffers report, on the basis of several studies of West German public-transportation systems. "They make you feel secure, because at all times they help you know just where you are and just what the city around you at that point offers."

Toni Sachs Pfeiffer comments, "A mental map takes on value not so much from major landmarks as from being able to fill up the in-betweens with a rich set of overlapping experiences. In the normal course of events, most city people, depending on their mobility, have maybe five to ten places that they go back to regularly, and a dozen others that they visit more occasionally. If they head for such places on a trolley car, they have a chance to fill in the gaps, because as soon as something new that looks worth exploring hits their eye along the way, they have a chance either to hop off immediately or to come back later on, and get to know areas they might otherwise miss. For tourists, especially, this is a way to be able to start experiencing a city very directly, right from the start. Because they can say, 'Oh, look at that, let's go look, we'll get out here at the next corner.' "

IF new research and a new need to do something about the state of New York's streets smooth the way for people interested in modern trolley cars, there are also a couple of unexamined obstacles in the way of the project, beyond the lingering hostility of some older Manhattanites. As a result of a long-standing lack of information about transportation in the city, very few New Yorkers, whether they like trolleys or not, have any conception of the transportation systems that the city would now offer if it had kept the many promises it has made to itself over and over, beginning at least sixty years ago. Brooklynites know what we've lost, but there is also what we never got—and, beyond that, what we've never aspired to.

It is now the goal of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the parent body of the New York City subway system, to restore the subways to the level of service they offered in the nineteen-fifties—a period that most New Yorkers who remember the trains of those days assume represents the full bloom of the subways. But the fact is, as a perusal of a master plan adopted by the city in 1929 shows, what we had in the fifties was only a half-opened flower that had been frozen by an early frost: the Depression stopped the city from building a subway under Second Avenue in Manhattan and five new lines through Queens that would have reached almost to Nassau County. And all the remaining El lines—the nineteenth-century Brooklyn Els and the twentieth-century Els built as temporary outer-end extensions of subway lines—would now run through subway tunnels.

Moreover, the completed city subway system would have been only one element in a comprehensive, twenty-mile-wide, bistate Rapid Transit District, a network of trains serving the entire New York Harbor area on both sides of the Hudson River, with trains running every few minutes between the five boroughs of New York and thirteen cities and towns in New Jersey. The district's track alignments were sketched out in 1927 by the Regional Plan Association, or R.P.A., to complete the second half of a balanced regional-transportation-development program of new highways and new railroads whose first half had been seven years in the making. It would have produced a system much like the one that Paris started building twenty years ago; you can now get in a regional high-speed subway train a block from Notre-Dame and find yourself half an hour later at a small-town subway stop in the forests and farmlands on the far side of Versailles.



In New York, we now have all the highways that the R.P.A. dreamed of in 1927; need, willingness, and money made them possible, and they were completed more than twenty years ago. The rail lines in the R.P.A. vision have yet to be built, but two plans for new trolley-car lines are under active consideration in New York City at the moment. One would run along Forty-second Street in Manhattan, from the United Nations, on the East River, past Grand Central Terminal, the New York Public Library, and Times Square, to the Hudson River, and down either Eleventh or Twelfth Avenue to the Convention Center, at Thirty-seventh Street. The trolleys would displace two lanes of automobile traffic on the south side of Forty-second and beat the river-to-river running time of today's M42 bus by six to ten minutes. According to Frederic Papert, the New Yorker who first had a vision of trolleys rolling once again on Forty-second, this light-rail line could serve a number of purposes, including economic development. Papert is a former advertising man who has also been the driving force behind Theatre Row, a thriving collection of nine Off Broadway theatres and four restaurants on West Forty-second Street.

For instance, tourism, the city's No. 2 industry (after the garment industry), which continues to grow even while Wall Street has been laying off thousands, has never had an organizing focus, and since Times Square is one of the biggest tourist attractions in New York, along with the United Nations and the Circle Line boats, which moor near the Convention Center, a trolley-car line along Forty-second could make that street a kind of centralized tourist mall, with the U.N. as one anchor and the Convention Center as the other. There is also a newly forming residential population at the west end of Forty-second who would be likely to make use of a new trolley: a thirty-five-story apartment house at the corner of Eleventh Avenue opened its doors a year ago; a forty-story condominium tower at the corner of Tenth Avenue will be ready for occupancy in April; and two other high-rise residential towers are under construction. Trolleys could be running the length of Forty-second within three years of city approval of the project, Papert says.

The other proposed trolley line is the vision of Dominick Massa, a Brooklyn factory-management consultant and real-estate developer, who was the chairman of the Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation from 1984 to 1988. His line, along the waterfront in the Brooklyn neighborhood called Sunset Park, which is one of only a few rapidly growing industrial areas in the entire city, would serve twenty-eight thousand wage earners in and around Bush Terminal, who now have to trudge up a four-block-long hill under the Gowanus Expressway every evening to reach the closest subway station—a bone-chilling walk on winter nights when a wet wind sweeps in across the Upper Bay. Most of the track that this line would use is already in place, along thirty blocks that used to be served by freight trains. Massa knows where to find nineteen P.C.C. cars—"in cream-puff condition," he says—that have just come on the market. He also has on hand what he thinks of as a crowning glory: a genuine old Brooklyn P.C.C. car. In fact, it is the oldest one of all, "Car Ten Hundred," otherwise known as P.C.C. Car No. 1000, which in the nineteen-forties actually saw service on the line that Massa wants to revive. Ten Hundred was the first P.C.C. to arrive in Brooklyn and is also the only all-aluminum P.C.C. car ever made.

Is there much hope for either of these projects—for generating the need, the will, and the money that they require? Actually, in the case of the Forty-second Street line,

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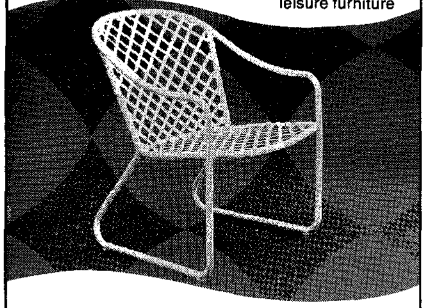

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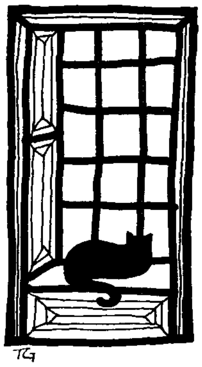
only need and will are called for, because, according to a new study by Public Financial Management, Inc., Samuel Katz's consulting firm, "the private financial markets appear poised to step in." In his opinion, light-rail manufacturers are ready to take on the full costs of a revived Forty-second Street trolley-car line because it would provide "excellent opportunities" to display their newest cars and latest improvements in "the major market," as Katz refers to New York. Still, is there much hope? Dominick Massa had his vision only two years ago, but Frederic Papert has been talking about trolleys for ten years now, and so far all that has happened is that city agencies have commissioned eleven studies—all of them ultimately favorable to the project—at a cost of two and a half million dollars. The New York City Planning Commission, the New York City Department of Transportation, and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority have all said at various times in recent years that they would like to see trolley cars running on Forty-second Street, particularly if the city didn't have to pay for them, but no agency has yet committed itself to a construction timetable.



Some problems that seemed daunting when the Forty-second Street project first came up—traffic flow, for instance—have now been settled: trolleys would usurp two lanes on Forty-second, but normal traffic flow on that street, it turns out, consists mostly of short hops, and so could be accommodated without inconvenience simply by making all the non-trolley-car lanes on Forty-second run one-way westbound and at the same time converting Forty-third, the next street north, which now runs west, into an eastbound street.

Questions about the feasibility of the trolley project which have surfaced more recently also seem answerable. Some city officials are now reported to be having doubts about whether New Yorkers could be trusted to pay their fares if the Forty-second Street trolleys adopted some kind of honor system for fare collection. (Honor systems are by far the cheapest to administer.) But these same doubts seem to arise—and subsequently are laid to rest—in every North American city that has contemplated light rail in the last decade. Out in San Diego, for example, according to William Lieberman, the director of planning and operations for the San Diego Metropolitan Transit Development Board—whose system now boasts a fare-evasion rate of 1.1 per cent, one of the lowest rates for any form of mass transit in the country—"we originally assumed that this honor stuff is O.K. for Europeans, but people don't function that way here in America." It turned out that Americans *do* function that way—if certain guidelines are put in place. A transit line has to spread the word that it will be making frequent random checks of people's tickets; it then has to make those frequent checks; and, finally, it has to make sure in advance that local courts are willing to slap heavy fines on any fare beaters brought before them.

Since all the practical problems of trolleys seem solvable, some local foundation officials and educators I've talked to lately suspect that the only force retarding the Forty-second Street project is the difficulty of launching almost any kind of community project when a city has grown accustomed to putting up with disheartening and alarming developments year after year; after a while, responsible citizens begin to succumb to a sense of powerlessness about ever seeing beneficial changes take place. This feeling leads sooner or later to three other attitudes: a willingness to accept as normal some conditions that would have been angrily rejected in the past as insulting and intolerable; blindness to those elements of the city which are still strong and functioning properly; and, finally, an inability to imagine what the community could be like at some time in the future.

Still, there remains room for optimism in the transportation picture. Juri Pill, the general manager for administration and planning for the Toronto Transit Commission, thinks that by the middle of the next century the automobile will be used only for recreation, the way the horse is today. And the anthropologist Edward T. Hall says, "A great way to get over pessimism is to start producing good things for people."

—Tony Hiss

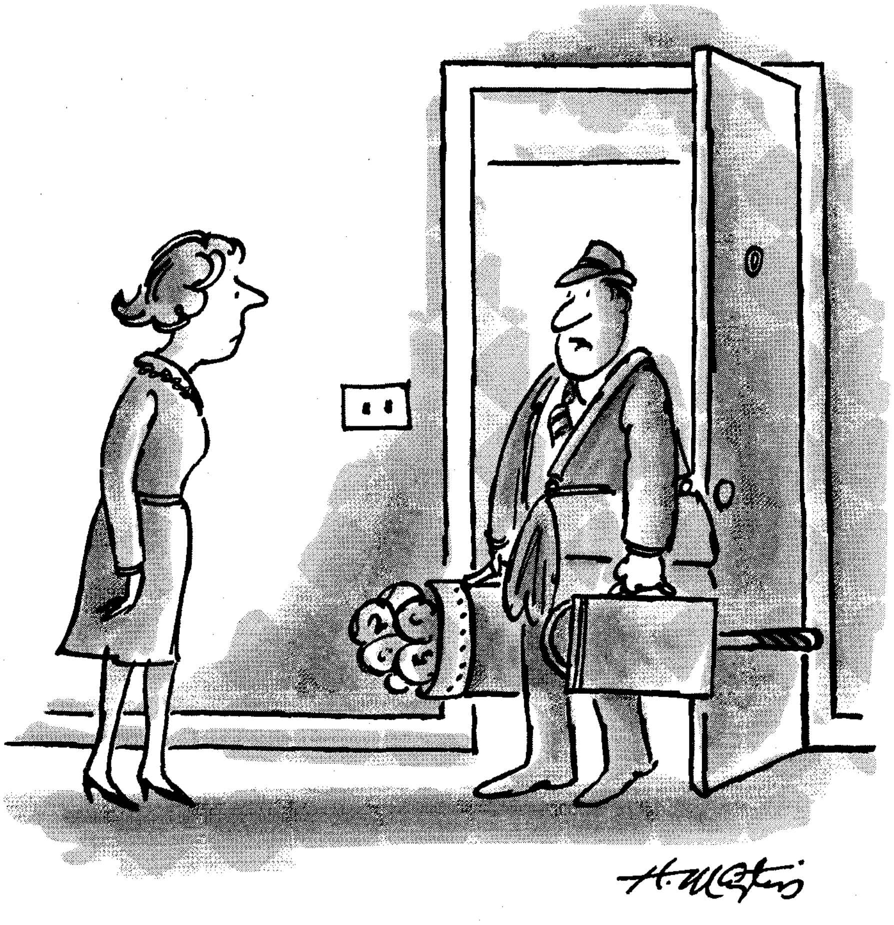
THE THEATRE

Bright Young Things

THE production of "Love's Labor's Lost" at the Public, as directed by Gerald Freedman, with his customary light, precise touch, makes no demands upon its audience except enjoyment and understanding. In a program note Mr. Freedman writes, "When I first directed 'Love's Labor's Lost' in 1965, I thought the play was about the 'game of love.' But I soon arrived at a deeper reading of the play, one that would more accurately be described as the 'truth of love.' I came to realize that I was dealing in this comedy with fully rounded people—men and women vulnerable to chance, to pain, and, ultimately, to death." Absolutely so, I guess, but I'm glad I read the note after I'd seen the play, not beforehand. It never occurred to me that the young lovers were not human and sensitive as they played their games of love, or that they would not respond wholeheartedly to the real thing. The action is set in the nineteen-thirties, the decade of "the bright young things," who, as Evelyn Waugh portrayed them in novel after novel (and Congreve, two centuries before), also were brought up short in all sorts of frivolities and games, and transformed by love. This transformation takes place in what appear to be the grounds of a country estate, where the young King of Navarre and three of his courtiers—Longaville, Dumaine, and Berowne—have retreated to fulfill their vows of celibacy and study for three years. When the Princess of France arrives on a state visit with three of her ladies-in-waiting—Maria, Katharine, and Rosaline—"Love's Labor's" becomes a play about four young men who fall deeply in love with four young women but are prevented by their vows from doing anything about it. Once they forswear their vows, they are free to masquerade, and play tricks, and give favors, and speak some of the loveliest poetry on earth. The eight actors and actresses in these roles are agreeable enough and clear enough. William Converse-Roberts, as the witty Berowne—that Mercutio in the making—is better than that. The funniest performances, though, are those of the visitors to royalty. Richard Libertini is the verbose and fantastical Don Adriano de Armado; tall and elaborately dressed in black, he looks like a Feliks Topolski drawing. P. J. Ochlan is the little boy who plays his page, Ronn Carroll is the pompous parson Sir Nathaniel, Joseph Costa is the pompous schoolmaster Holofernes, and Steve Routman and Julia Gibson are very entertaining as a country swain and a country wench. John Horton, in the small part of a lord attendant on the Princess, is the most vigorous actor in the company, speaking his Shakespearean lines as if to the manner born. The good setting was designed by John Ezell and lighted by Natasha Katz; the good costumes were designed by James Scott. "Love's Labor's Lost" is No. 7 in Joseph Papp's Shakespeare Marathon.

HIZZONER of "Hizzoner!," Paul Shyre's one-man play starring Tony Lo Bianco, is, of course, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia of this city, perhaps best known now as the combustible hero of the musical "Fiorello!," which is always in revival somewhere. The action is set in his office, on his last day as mayor, in 1945, and as he empties drawers and goes through files of correspondence and puts souvenirs and special letters in packing cases he reviews aloud the story of his life. Mr. Lo Bianco is a very good actor—as he proved in "The Rose Tattoo" and "The Goodbye People" and my old favorite "Yanks–3, Detroit–0, Top of the Seventh"—but he is only an indifferent mimic. The role is part impersonation, and it is dotted with small impersonations, on the side, of F.D.R. and Mrs. Roosevelt and Robert Moses, among others, but never once did I find myself saying "That's it" or "That's him"—which, after all, is the test. Again, no quarrel with the acting, which is better than the play deserves. At the preview I saw, Mr. Lo Bianco performed with a cast on his right leg. It must have been terribly burdensome, though no more so than the blocks of solid exposition that he had to drag through two full hours.

—EDITH OLIVER



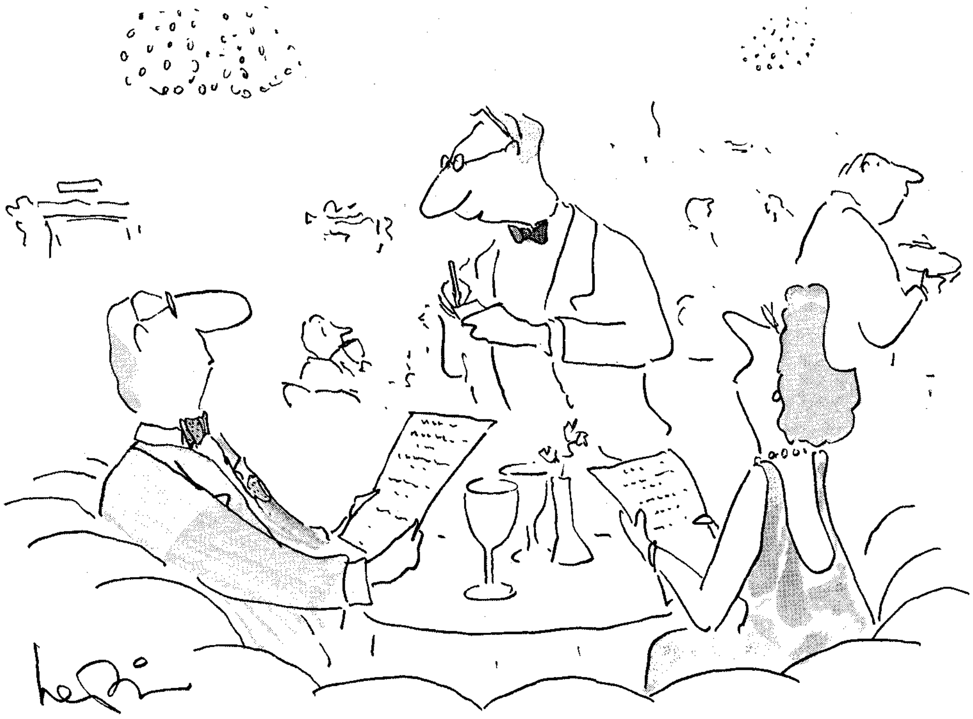
"Goodbye, Maryann. I have twenty-five vacation days coming to me."

MUSICAL EVENTS

Abundance

THESE days, most large musical cities have a classical orchestra or two in regular, though perhaps not full-time, employment. London has several: Roger Norrington's London Classical Players, John Eliot Gardiner's English Baroque Soloists, Christopher Hogwood's Academy of Ancient Music, Trevor Pinnock's English Concert, and others that in concert rooms and on records offer alternatives to modern-orchestra execution of Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven. At Glyndebourne this summer, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment will be in the pit for "Figaro." New York is not unprovided with able classical instrumentalists; bands are quite often brought together for special events; and plans to establish a regular orchestra are mooted. Mostly Mozart, the Y Schubertiade, the proposed mini-Met, and the opera and oratorio performances now given with pickup original-instrument groups could help to keep such an orchestra together, in frequent employment. As a first step toward something more stable, a New York Classical Orchestra, directed by Stanley Ritchie, made its début in January, in Merkin Hall's On Original Instruments series, playing Haydn and Mozart. It was a small orchestra: eight fiddles, pairs of violas and cellos, one double-bass; flute, pairs of oboes, bassoons, and horns; harpsichord. Haydn's Forty-ninth Symphony and his C-major Violin Concerto received rather dull performances. Things came to life when Malcolm Bilson and his fortepiano (a Philip Belt copy of the Anton Walter instrument that Mozart owned) joined the ensemble. As a "prelude," Mr. Bilson played Mozart's "Come un agnello" variations, gracefully and wittily, and then he was the soloist in the last concerto, K. 595, in B-flat. This is a work to demonstrate the merits of original-instrument timbres—especially in the first-movement passage where, after the pianist has played the theme in B minor and in C, the oboe, the bassoon, and the flute, piano-accompanied, lead it in lapped entries through key after key. C. M. Girdlestone in his book on the Mozart concertos remarks, "We would urge conductors to make their violins, flute, hautboys and bassoons play out all through this development. . . . The weakness of the H.M.V. recording lies in that one has to have the score in hand to hear the orchestral parts." (He refers to the Artur Schnabel recording, with the London Symphony and Barbirolli; it has now been reissued by Arabesque in a valuable CD set of all Schnabel's Mozart recordings.) In the Merkin performance, the wind solos—warmly shaped and exquisitely sounded by Stephen Hammer, Dennis Godburn, and Sandra Miller—sang out in perfect balance with the piano. The sweet, clear timbre of the instrument made much of the Larghetto. Its lightness and sparkle enhanced the springtime theme of the finale. Fortepianos don't play themselves; I am not forgetting how much was due to Mr. Bilson's liveliness of rhythm and phrasing, his subtleties of accent and inflection, his strongly characterized approach. Composer and interpreter came together to give a kind of delight not attainable—though other, also important kinds of delight are—when the concerto is rendered on modern instruments of thicker, more powerful tone.

There were some well-known players among the strings, but the ensemble string tone was not pleasing. It had that slightly wheezy, asthenic quality associated with early days of the classical-instrument revival. The New York Classical Orchestra has a way to go. But it has made a start.



"Yes, sir. The prices are given on request. However, all requests must be in writing."

FEBRUARY is the busiest month, it seems, for New York music, and this February the season at Columbia University's Kathryn Bache Miller Theatre (the former McMillan Theatre, now renovated and reëquipped) made it a busier month than ever. I managed to get there for Harvey Sollberger's flute recital, which included Roger Reynolds' mysterious, poetic "Transfigured Wind IV," for flute and tape, and ended with Stefan Wolpe's etched, masterly Piece in Two Parts, for flute and piano (played by Sandra Sprecher). And for a Riverside Symphony concert. But I missed Speculum Musicae's Stravinsky evening (the Octet, the Concertino, and "The Soldier's Tale") and recitals by Gilbert Kalish, by Rolf Schulte and Alan Feinberg, by John Graham. Schubert at the 92nd Street Y—the second year of New York's ten-year Schubertiade, a chronological traversal of all Schubert's compositions—filled most of the month. More about that later.

Donald Martino's Concerto for Alto

Saxophone and Orchestra, a National Endowment for the Arts "consortium" commission, had its first performance at the 1987 Monadnock festival and its first New York performance at the Riverside concert. The soloist was John Sampen, one of the three saxophonists to whom the concerto is dedicated; the orchestra was conducted by George Rothman. The work is in three movements, which are played without break to form a twenty-three-minute stretch of lyrical and ever-fascinating music. Martino is a romantic, in his gestures and his sounds, but not a champion of or contributor to modish "New Romanticism," in which—in the Riverside program annotator's tart words—"there is little *new* . . . beyond the purloined and the pandering." The concerto impresses one first by its exuberance of invention. The soloist begins with a beautiful, singable twelve-note melody, and then proceeds to show his instrument's ability to deck a tune with Chopinesque tracery. Composers have generally used the saxophone for special effects, drawing on its "oleaginous," "glutinous," or "piercing-sickly-sweet" qualities: to accompany the pantomime of the wicked Player King in Thomas's "Hamlet"; the Three Wily Hypocrites, false comforters in Vaughan Williams' "Job"; the wails of the flogged novice in Britten's "Billy Budd." But Webern used a tenor sax soberly in his Opus 22 Quartet; and Milton Babbitt in "Images," for alto sax (with soprano and sopranino interludes) and tape, brings the instrument right into the modern world. Composers versed in jazz enjoy its vivacity and velocity and its protean voice. It can sparkle, and it can sing emotionally without becoming "oily." Martino uses it in this way, with poetry and with grace. His scoring, for a medium-sized orchestra, including piano, is iridescent, imaginative, unusual: the single trumpet is asked to switch to flugelhorn; swift, sudden doublings fleck the solo line with points of light. This is a captivating piece, richly but elegantly wrought.

The performance seemed to me first-rate: Mr. Sampen an engaging virtuoso; quicksilver playing from the orchestra. Arriving late—during the "dinner break" of a seven-hour Schubertiade session—I listened to Stravinsky's Danses Concertantes, which preceded the concerto, from an offstage station; it received a lithe, well-defined performance. Leaving early—to return to Schubert—I missed the "Jupiter" Symphony that followed. But I had heard enough to admire Mr. Rothman's young orchestra: not just another assemblage of familiar players from New York's free-lance pool but a dedicated, lively ensemble. The next Riverside Symphony concert, also at the Miller Theatre—and, like this one, with free admission—is on March 19th.

ONE night, I played hooky from the Schubertiade—skipped Hermann Prey's master class—to hear John Harbison's "Snow Country," done by the Apple Hill Chamber Players at a Merkin Hall concert. It is not a new work—it was composed ten years ago—but this was the New York première. The piece, for oboe and strings, is a small, moving tone poem, a winter journey through harmonic fields with the oboe the traveller, the five-part strings a landscape now bleak, now glistering, and hinting sometimes at the promise of spring's return. The concert began with Boccherini's playful, picturesque quintet "La Musica Notturna delle Strade di Madrid"—Edward Sackville-West once exclaimed, "What enchanting music Boccherini could invent, apparently at the drop of a hat!"—and continued with a vigorous account of Beethoven's early C-minor Piano Trio. It ended with Elgar's late Piano Quintet, bravely and broadly played. The cellist, Paul Cohen, was especially eloquent, yet he would have been more so had he brought to those aspirant melodies the portamento that we hear in recordings made by the cellists of Elgar's day.

THE Orchestre de Paris, conducted by Daniel Barenboim, gave four February concerts in New York, and two of them—both in Avery Fisher Hall—did not coincide with Schubertiade events. They were remarkable only for their programs: Beethoven's Missa Solemnis and the second act of "Tristan." I heard the Orchestre de Paris in its early years—it was founded in 1967, under Charles Munch, and after Munch's death, a year later, it was guided for three years by Karajan and for three by Solti—and have not heard it much since. Like Walter Legge's Philharmonia, it was

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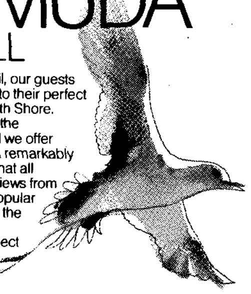

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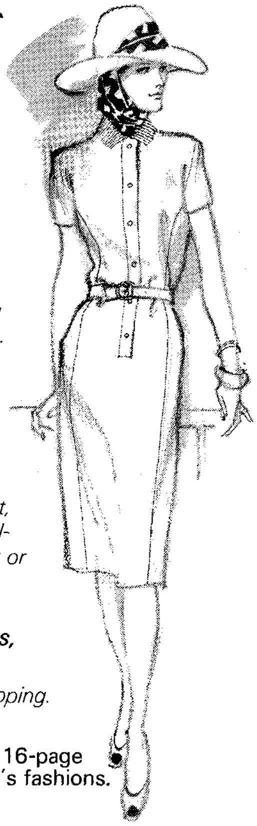

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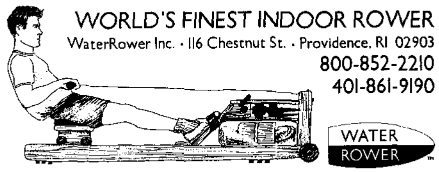

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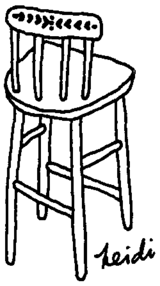
formed to provide an orchestra-rich city with an ensemble superior to the competition, and in those early years it was indeed a virtuoso ensemble, with a bright, polished sound of its own. No longer—to judge by the two New York concerts. Under Barenboim, who has been its music director for some fourteen years, the playing was efficient but characterless. So was the singing of the Chœur de l'Orchestre de Paris. The Missa Solemnis was given a touch of distinction by the alto soloist, Waltraud Meier. Her singing (in a role created by Caroline Ungher, later the heroine of Donizetti's "Parisina," "Belisario," and "Maria di Rudenz," and of Bellini's "La Straniera") was strong, steady, and—especially in the Agnus—fervent.



Miss Meier, the Brangäne, was also the star of the "Tristan" Act II. Brangäne's warnings rang out, from the back of the platform, with wonderful warmth, fullness, and beauty. Can Act II of "Tristan" make a *satisfactory concert item?* (The Philharmonic presented it as such in 1939—Kirsten Flagstad the Isolde, Barbirolli the conductor—and a pirate recording captures the event for posterity.) At any rate, this performance was less than satisfactory. For one thing, nothing much seemed to happen between the Tristan and the Isolde, Gary Lakes and Hildegard Behrens. It was not only that they stood, scores on music stands before them, one left and one right of the podium, divided by Mr. Barenboim. Musically they were divided: not singing to and with one another. The duet, which fills most of the act, was not a duet of phrase leaping from phrase, of words taken up by one even as the other thinks them, of two souls so closely united that a single musical line seems to breathe through and embrace both soprano and tenor registers, "*endlos ewig ein-bewusst.*" Mr. Lakes, a great lump of a man, sounded the notes steadily and accurately but gave little expressiveness to the phrases and hardly began to suggest a Tristan. Miss Behrens seemed to be playing a somewhat quizzical, rather than a loving, Isolde. One watched—and heard—an intelligent, experienced woman torn between apparent reluctance to commit herself heart and soul to an unresponding blond bear and ardent emotional, artistic commitment to the great role. Miss Behrens' voice has not the natural amplitude that an Isolde needs. She has built up a shining, carrying top at the expense of the lower reaches. Little low notes and little passing notes were often skimped; grace notes and the ecstatic turn were indistinct. Nevertheless, though she may be a fausse-Isolde—or an Isolde best equipped for productions in a smaller house—she is possessed of art and temperament that make listeners, for want of the real thing, grateful to her. King Mark, with his long reproach to the friend who betrayed him, needs a word. I'm unsure what the word should be. John Tomlinson—long an English National Opera bass, and now Bayreuth's Wotan—has a strong voice that is impressive enough in its way, but he invested everything he said with what sounded like all-purpose, not specific, rhetorical resonance.

Barenboim's performance lasted seventy-four minutes, which is about standard for the act. Bayreuth's official list of *Stopzeiten* gives seventy-five minutes for Felix Mottl in 1886, Furtwängler in 1931, and Eugen Jochum in 1953; seventy-four for Karajan in 1952. Michael Balling in 1906 and Toscanini in 1930 share the longest timing (eighty-one minutes), and only de Sabata in 1939 (seventy-two) takes less than seventy-four. (For a significant difference one must turn to Furtwängler's 1952 recording, where the act lasts eighty-seven minutes, or to Reginald Goodall's 1981 recording, where it lasts eighty-eight.) But a stopwatch over a long span is no indicator of the tempos adopted within it: a conductor who drives the fast passages and drags the slow ones may achieve the same total duration as a conductor more moderate. Sometimes I thought Barenboim hectic—outwardly rather than inwardly impetuous—and some transitions in the love duet did not flow naturally. He was certainly too loud: again and again urging an orchestra out on the open platform—not deep in the Bayreuth pit (where he has often conducted the opera)—to play with all its might, condemning any delicacies on the singers' part to inaudibility. He has a clear idea how he wants the act to move. But I missed beauty of sound, beauty of detail, world-annihilating rapture.

—ANDREW PORTER

THE CURRENT CINEMA

Killers and Cousins

"OUT COLD" is trim and smart—a handsome, dispassionate murder comedy that's kept in equilibrium from beginning to end. The picture has what Dashiell Hammett's Casper Gutman might have called "a nice malice." It's an American movie, set mostly in and around San Pedro, California, but the calm with which the young English director, Malcolm Mowbray (who made the 1984 "A Private Function," with Maggie Smith and Michael Palin), keeps everything in check doesn't seem American, exactly. Mowbray's deliberateness has a lunar dimension. Laughs gurgle out of you unexpectedly. I think this has something to do with the fact that Mowbray lays things out for us privately. The film's black jokes don't explode; they don't go public. The film is so evenly paced it's almost secretive.

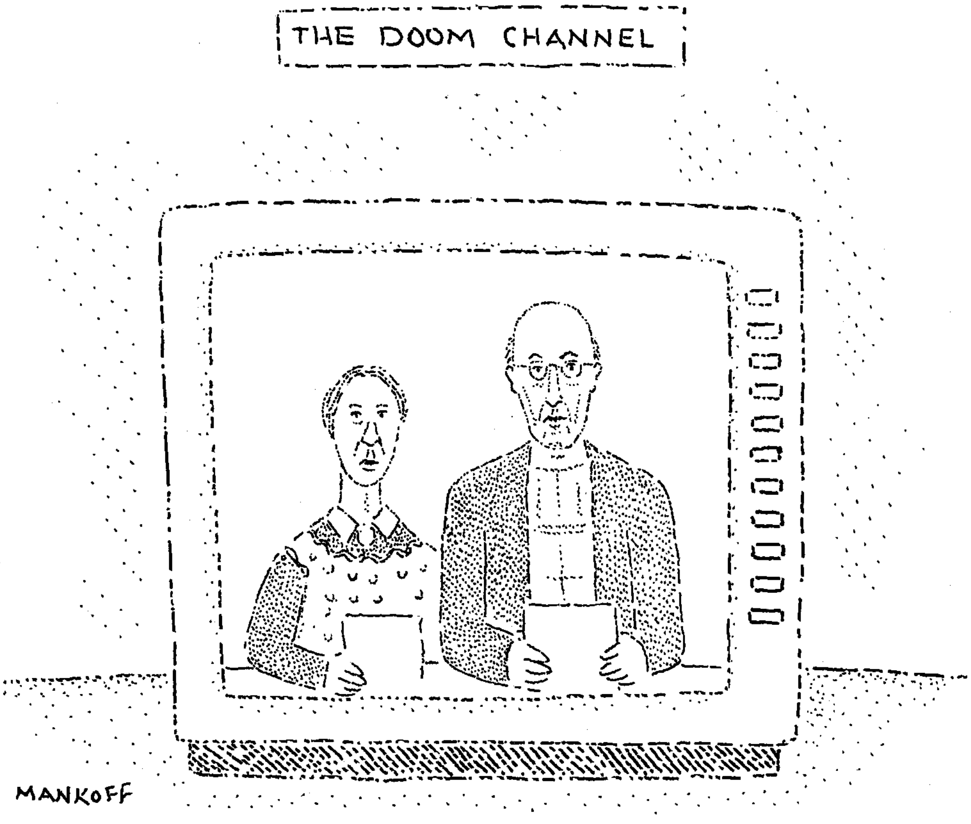
Sunny (Teri Garr) can't think of anything except the money that her vain, beefy husband, Ernie (Bruce McGill), is spending on other women. She hires a private detective (Randy Quaid)—a supreme jerk—to get the goods on him, so she can clean him out in a divorce action. But she's too restless to give the detective even a few days. She grabs a chance to kill Ernie and make his business partner, Dave (John Lithgow), think he did it. Ernie and Dave worked as butchers in the Army, and when they got out they ran a butcher shop together. Big, shy Dave, a bachelor and a slave to the business, has always been in love with Sunny; convinced that he killed Ernie by accidentally locking him in the freezer, he prostrates himself before her, and the movie is under way.

Lithgow's Dave suggests the mousy young Alec Guinness in the body of a giant. Dave has a big mug but small, babyish features. He's a trusting person with a slow-motion brain: he's just what Sunny needs. There's cleanup work to be done. Ernie is upright in the freezer, with the chocolate-covered ice-cream bar he was eating frozen to his forehead, and the lunkhead detective, who thinks he's got pictures of Ernie's paramour visiting him at the shop, has actually photographed Sunny on the night she stiffed him. As Sunny, Teri Garr is slim and fast. She moves like a darting goldfish. And she's like a psychic in reverse: we can read the workings of her mind. We follow her slapdash, opportunistic scheming as clearly as if her thoughts were comic-strip captions. But neither Dave nor Lester Atlas, the detective—each of them a hulking six feet four—can read the writing. Quaid's Atlas, who's sly but doltish, gets everything wrong. And he's seedy to the core: his professional pride in his work is expressed in a lecherous smirk. Atlas's emotional needs are just about satisfied by photographing husbands with their pants down.

Teri Garr plays her role with a savage, twinkling joy. Why doesn't her skill get more recognition? I think it's partly because she holds nothing back, and emotions so shallow yet so fully communicated belong to caricature, to sketches. She seems two-dimensional, crisp, weightless. That's why she's perfect for this movie. A few glints of Sunny's eyes and a slight nibble of her lip and it's clear just what she's up to. (When she wants something, she sends out rays.) Sunny doesn't feel an instant's remorse for killing Ernie; she's getting her own back. She doesn't feel any pity for dumb Dave. (Neither do we.) And clumsy, oafish Lester Atlas is just an inconvenience to be got rid of—albeit a big inconvenience. (His tenacity provides a motor for the plot.)

These monsters are all acted so impeccably that there's nothing crude about the movie. The repeated shots of hamburger coming out of the grinder are like macabre mood music. And the clear, clean morning light and the Edward Hopper streets and storefronts create a world where the script, by Leonard Glasser and George Malko, plays itself out in all its linear precision. This small, disingenuous comedy has been buffed to shine like a jewel; the smoothness of it keeps you giggling.

IN "Parents," Randy Quaid is terrifyingly outsize. As Nick, who works as a defoliation expert at Toxico, a chemical plant, in 1958, he's swollen with well-being; when he puffs out his cheeks, he recalls Zero Mostel in "Rhinoceros." Nick has everything he wants: an adoring, obedi-



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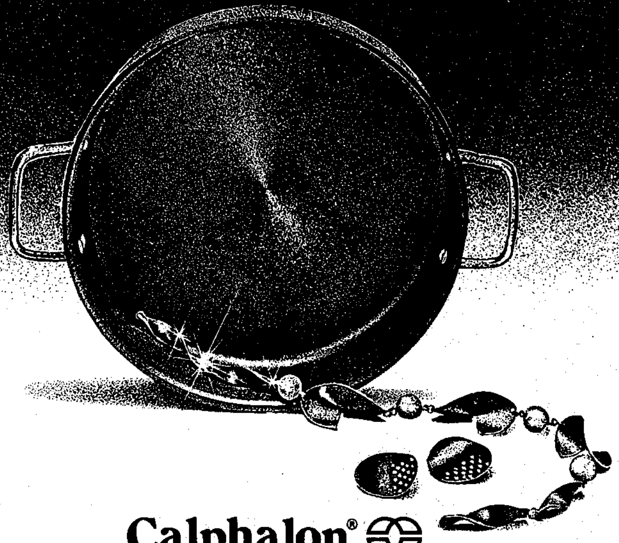

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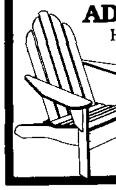

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ent wife, Lily (Mary Beth Hurt), who spends her days working cheerfully in the kitchen of their split-level home. Situated in suburban Indiana, that house is like a shrine to conformist America of the fifties. Nick and Lily are both in tip-top shape; they're a lovey-dovey pair of married sweethearts, like the couples in *Life*. And Nick has his golf and his wine cellar (robust red wine only). All's right with the world—a man's world—except for that miserable, finicky little kid Michael (Bryan Madorsky), Nick and Lily's ten-year-old son, who won't eat his meat to grow up as big and strong as Daddy.

"Parents"—in which we're always looking up at Nick through the eyes of scrawny, scared Michael—starts as a satiric comedy set in the polite repressiveness of the Eisenhower period. Michael intuitively knows that more than this clean, upbeat, all-American stuff is going on in his home, but he doesn't know what. He wrestles with nightmarish visions in which sex and eating meat are all one smeary chaos. He has no one to turn to until his school psychologist (Sandy Dennis) calls him in. She wants to know why, when the children in his class were asked to draw pictures of their families, he smudged his all over with red crayon.

The first feature directed by the actor Bob Balaban, "Parents" is a stunning dêbut, even though the story finally lapses into gory banality. The script, by Christopher Hawthorne, is quite good until then. But Hawthorne seems to have got into a metaphorical plot he couldn't work out: confused little Michael is a budding version of the hippies of the sixties who thought that their keeping-up-with-the-Joneses middle-class parents incarnated man-eating capitalist imperialism. The script carries this counterculture fantasy into horror-movie effects, leaving the satire undeveloped, and doing away with the ingenuity we've been enjoying. Balaban has the help of some witty people, such as the art director, Andris Hausmanis, who's given Nick and Lily a dawning-of-the-space-age open-plan house that's an Expressionist jamboree. And the costume designer, Arthur Rowsell, has put Mary Beth Hurt into a series of full-skirted, pinch-waisted outfits that lampoon the ideal housewife of the era. The house itself makes low, organic sounds, like a dragon in a dream; here and elsewhere, Balaban and his team have learned from David Lynch.

Balaban doesn't need to bow to anyone in his handling of the actors; his work with the young performers, especially, is wizardly. One look at Michael and we know that everything about him is a disappointment to his father, and that Michael knows it. The boy's scenes with Juno Mills-Cockell, who plays his new school friend, Sheila, are inexplicably flaky. And his scenes with Sandy Dennis (who, the man next to me said, suggested "Shelley Winters crossed with Jeanne Moreau") go into comedy heaven. This blowsy psychologist is aware that she gives the impression of being askew, but she's just naturally uncoördinated—she can't get herself together. Michael trusts her instinctively just because she's not together, like his parents. Or, as he puts it to her, "you're not a real grownup."

Michael's mother is definitely a grownup. He can't get past her vacuous, picture-perfect role-playing, though he knows that she loves him. Mary Beth Hurt's Lily is trying so hard to be a flawless wife that it's like a daily performance. In her spearhead bra and flouncy skirts and spikes, she's armored for peppiness; her teeth flash in her pointed mouth—she's *on*. Hurt turns herself into a corky cartoon, using every chance she gets to modulate it with hints of desperation. Lily's brittle dinky curls could almost be squeezing her head; she's insanely chipper—she's pitifully sweet.

Balaban seems to have the knack of encouraging performers to bring out new sides. Quaid shows a spooky wit in the scenes where Nick reassures Michael about his fear of the dark: the father's face is impassive, faintly smiling, sinister. And Nick carves meat with an enthusiasm that is unlike any expression I've seen on Quaid's face before; he has a new red-bloodedness in this role. (The worst thing Nick can say to his wife is "Your son, the vegetarian.") Few screen actors have shown the range that Quaid has in recent years: his L.B.J. on television was a phenomenal piece of work, and he carries it with him—the partly buried joke is that as Nick he foreshadows the President as defoliator. In "Parents"—the right title, yet a hopelessly prosaic one, and a clue to the unresolved emotions that bring the picture down—Quaid is Father the Provider as a helpless, neurotic boy sees him: as devil, as archenemy. He's the father who threatens to give up on his kid. Quaid has a major comic presence here; his grin is pure audacity.

ISABELLA ROSSELLINI and Ted Danson are at the still center of "Cousins," smiling serenely while the others in the cast busily bang away at their joie de vivre. The pair's quiet normality gives moviegoers a peaceful sensation: you're not being asked to identify with the dingalings and obsessives and high-energy sexpots who surround them—you can simply rest your eyes on Rossellini. She doesn't have the animation or the temperament of a trained actress, but this lack of technique seems to work for her; her unforced expressiveness has a grace—it's as if she were too friendly and sensible to go in for the usual affectations. In some ways, the less she does, the better: we're not distracted from gaping at her eerie pearliness. And since the story gives her an infantile, skirt-chasing husband (William Petersen), who doesn't see in her what we do, we feel superior to him—even sorry for him, when we're not exasperated by him. He's wearing himself down, cluttering his days by sneaking out for quickies, like the one he has with Danson's frantic, obnoxious wife (Sean Young). They're rabbits: they meet at a family wedding and hop off together.

That's the day Rossellini and Danson become cousins: her widowed mother (Norma Aleandro) marries his uncle (George Coe). It's a union of Italian and Polish families, in the Pacific Northwest. When the new cousins are left behind, they speak to each other; they're too tactful to mention it, but they know they have something in common—they're the injured parties. It turns out that neither has a happy marriage, and in the weeks that follow they're attracted to each other. But they don't become lovers—partly because of self-consciousness about their cheating spouses, and partly because their relatives are so sure they're having a hot furtive affair. The scenes that show the friendship that develops between them are easygoing and likable, but the plot rigging sticks out: they're not like their spouses—they're made of finer stuff. (Rossellini, with her childlike gaze, damn near makes you believe it.) They take pristine, romantic walks

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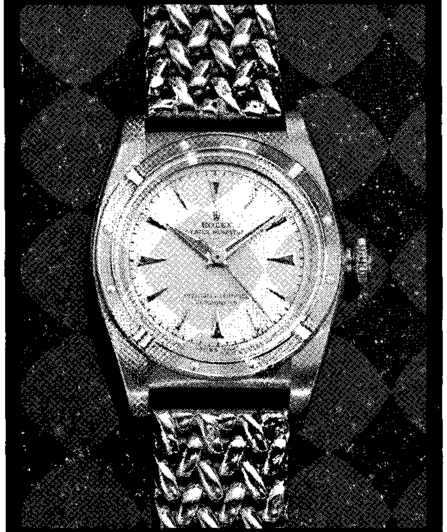

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in the country. And when their ardor can't be contained and they do go to bed together they don't hide their adultery—they're not hypocrites, they're open and honest. You can't be much more decent and heroic than they are. Extramarital sex has never been made more innocently pretty. They've been good for too long. So they kick up their heels: their tryst in a lakeside cabin is blissfully madcap.

"Cousins" is a canny Americanization of the celebrated French makeout movie "Cousin, Cousine" (1975), which was so life-affirming it treated the openhearted lovers' adultery as frolicsome, free-spirited nonconformity. There was no dark, turbid side to this sex comedy—nothing concealed or scary in the characters. That's what gave the French film its giddy appeal, and Joel Schumacher, who directed the American version, and Stephen Metcalfe, who wrote the adaptation, have kept it that way. In this romantic fantasyland, the Petersen and Sean Young characters, who are aggressively anxious about money and getting ahead, are treated satirically; the free spirits, Rossellini and Danson, who are indifferent to worldly success, don't lack anything. Life is a party, and everybody lives well. I found this American version (it was shot in British Columbia) somewhat easier to take than the French one—less pleased with itself, less arch about the characters' cuddly eccentricities. But the lyrical prosperity, the dewy, grassy vistas—it's all so thin. And as the picture goes on and on, and you get its box-office formula—sex without messiness, family without oppressive closeness—you may begin to feel as if you were in a carefree pink padded cell.

Bland, dreamy effervescence is what's being sold. The only break in the whimsical tone comes in the episode of the videotape that's made by Danson's adolescent son (Keith Coogan). The boy has shot the initial family wedding, catching as much of the happy, drunken misbehavior as he could, and when he displays his video at the next big family gathering the relatives are upset to see that he has turned it into a heavy-handed social-protest art work by crosscutting the footage with scenes of starvation and calamity. Though this sequence is lifted from an infinitely funnier sequence in the film of Mordecai Richler's "The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz," it still has a satirical kick. But Schumacher knows that his job here is to smoothen any rough edges and keep the movie restful; he goes right back to staging more weddings, a jolly funeral, and so on. This is the kind of movie in which the hero blows blues on the trumpet, and his uncle says of him that he's "a failure in everything except life." The movie conditions the audience, so that it actually laughs appreciatively when Danson's father (Lloyd Bridges) tells him to follow his heart: "You've only got one life to live. You can make it chickenshit or chicken salad."

People used to respond to the Doris Day sex comedies, too, and that's what "Cousins" (with its postponed sex) resembles—except that it isn't so insistently bright, and it's more woodlandsy, more radiant and idyllic. There are no villains: the spouses to be cast off are just screwed-up sillies. Petersen's frizzy-haired Don Juan is so anxious that he looks as if he might scratch himself bald. He chimes with the Sean Young character. Overdressed and curled and frazzled, she's a gorgeous wreck. She's also generally lively. But she's subdued compared with Lloyd Bridges, who comes on in roaring good form. (Yes, he overdoes the lusty heartiness, but the picture can use the shot of energy he brings it.)

Danson's Frankenstein-monster overhanging forehead saves him from being just a vapidly handsome horn-blower, and he's quite proficient. He hovers near Rossellini, an affable escort; the script gives him a little flipness—it helps. And Rossellini, limply "natural" and madonna-like, in simple, loose clothes, a minimum of makeup, and her own hair (she isn't coiffed up to the sky), brings some kind of reality to this pink tosh. Toward the end, when, for a time, her character is depressed and her eyes show that she has been crying, a pall is cast over the movie; everything is flabby while we wait for the restoration of the character's happiness. The only suspense the movie has is: How soon will she light up again? Rossellini's artlessness holds everything together. Soft as she is, she's got a collarbone like Garbo's.

—PAULINE KAEL

THE SKY LINE

Holding the Center

OUR leading authorities on the nature of cities nearly always turn out to be learned amateurs—men and women like Frederick Law Olmsted, Lewis Mumford, and Jane Jacobs. For them, such information as may be available in academe is secondary to the give-and-take of life as one experiences it in the course of walking the streets of a city: that hurly-burly of buffetings friendly and unfriendly, of merry and sad meetings and partings, of energy expended for purposes often obscure and sometimes unfathomable. How, they wonder, do we inhabitants of New York City manage to survive in circumstances at once so exhilarating and so difficult? What stratagems do we employ, whether consciously or unconsciously, in order to avoid the assortment of disasters to which (as we learn daily, and even hourly, from the media) our fellow-citizens are continually falling victim? No less to the point, what stratagems do we employ, against long odds, in order to be happy here?

The person best fitted to answer these questions is himself a seasoned New Yorker, seventy-one years of age, who for a large portion of those years has been subjecting the city to a scrutiny as close as that to which Thoreau—still another learned amateur—subjected Walden Pond and its environs. His name is William H. Whyte, and his equivalent of Thoreau's cabin is a narrow, high-stooped brownstone in the East Nineties. The middle initial of Whyte's name stands for Hollingsworth—a name that has led to his being addressed by the affectionate diminutive of Holly. Born in West Chester, Pennsylvania, educated at Princeton, and for many years a writer and an editor at *Fortune*, Whyte in his comparative youth achieved a large measure of fame by writing a best-seller called "The Organization Man"—a pioneering study of American business executives. Over the past sixteen years or so, with the help of grants from several philanthropic foundations, Whyte has been at work in scores of different neighborhoods not only in this city but in other cities, throughout the country and abroad, analyzing the way people use parks, plazas, streets, street furniture, sidewalks, and even curbstones and window ledges. He has earned a high place in the ranks of learned amateurs; indeed, he cannot be pigeonholed as this or that sort of professional only because no single profession can be said to contain him.

The fruit of Whyte's many years of labor has just been published by Doubleday, in a book entitled "City." Perhaps because the publishers feared that the title might prove a trifle *too* succinct, the book bears a subtitle: "Rediscovering the Center." (Which prompts a quibble on my part: It is to the discovery of the centers of our cities, and not to their *re*discovery, that Whyte wishes to call our attention. For in the days when our centers flourished we had little or no awareness of their possessing a value beyond that which was calculable in dollars and cents. And since it never crossed our minds that cities could exist *without* centers we had no reason to "discover" them; they were simply and grandly there, growing by a process of agglutination, and as if of their own accord, from one decade to the next.)

"City" is a surprisingly sunny book. Whyte appears to have embraced the point of view of the eighteenth-century English solicitor Oliver Edwards, who said, "I have tried too in my time to be a philosopher; but I don't know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in." It is plain that Whyte prefers hard facts to philosophy, and the cheerfulness with which he adduces hard facts and draws hard conclusions from them often, and most welcomely, distills itself into wit; he even goes as far as to make jokes that, unlike most New York City jokes, do not amount to a species of gallows humor.

Whyte finds much to deplore in the mutilation of our cities by blank-walled megastructures, by elevated walkways, by the rise of suburbia and its inhumanly vast shopping malls. In Whyte's view, mankind is instinctively centrip-

"Frankly, I don't like women."

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etal. He believes that a desire for concentration, and not scatteration, has been characteristic of city dwellers since cities began; historically, they have always preferred the disorder of an overcrowded Athenian agora to the clinical orderliness of the broad boulevards of a Brasília. He is well aware that the linear sprawl characteristic of so many contemporary American cities is a consequence of forces that are not essentially urban. Chief among those forces is the automobile, which, though it has come to dominate so many aspects of city planning, is by no means indispensable to cities; one could imagine with pleasure cities in which the automobile was banned and some form of subsidized rapid transit took its place. Automobiles tend to spin us away from the center.

To Whyte, there can scarcely be such a thing as urban overcrowding; in most cases, he says, our streets suffer not from having too many people on them but from having too few. In his introduction to "City" he writes:

> When I visit a city, I like to take some quick counts in the center of town at midday. If the pedestrian flows on the sidewalks are at a rate less than a thousand people an hour, the city could pave the streets with gold for all the difference it would make. The city is one that is losing its center or has already done so. There are simply not enough people to make it work—not enough to keep the last department store going, not enough to sustain some good restaurants, not enough to make lively life on its streets.
>
> It is sad to see how many cities have this emptiness at their core. It is sadder still to see how many are adopting exactly the approaches that will make matters worse. Most of their programs have in common as a stated purpose "relief from pedestrian congestion." There is no pedestrian congestion. What they need is pedestrian congestion. But what they are doing is taking what people are on the streets and putting them somewhere else. In a kind of holy war against the street, they are putting them up in overhead skyways, down in underground concourses, and into sealed atriums and galleries. They are putting them everywhere except at street level.

It is Whyte's contention that we tamper at our peril with the chaos of unpremeditated street activity. A street—any street—is, in effect, a room, and the more time we spend in it the more intensely roomlike it becomes. Napoleon is said to have called the Piazza San Marco, in Venice, the finest drawing room in Europe; by Whyte's reckoning, the plaza in front of the Seagram Building, on Park Avenue between Fifty-second Street and Fifty-third

Street, is for many of us the finest drawing room in New York. During hot summer months, noontime picnickers from neighboring office buildings are not above slipping off their shoes and stockings and wading barefoot in the large, shallow pools that occupy the plaza's outer corners.

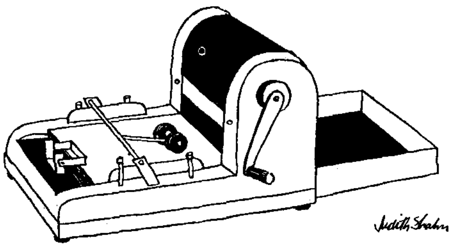
Another favorite gathering place of New Yorkers is the clamorous, vender-filled block on Lexington Avenue between Fifty-seventh Street and Fifty-eighth Street. Having sedulously kept count of pedestrian traffic on both sides of Lexington Avenue between the two streets, Whyte has discovered that, contrary to what an armchair theorist might have predicted, New Yorkers *prefer* the busier east side of the avenue to the less busy west side; unreasonably, we go out of our way to join the hubbub and so add to its size and incoherence.

WHYTE is a tall man with a beaked nose, a lantern jaw, and the bent shoulders of a professor who has spent his life in a library carrel several sizes too small for him, but this appearance is deceptive; in reality, he is an outdoorsman, a sort of urban Daniel Boone, who explores our streets and byways in all weathers and at all seasons of the year. He accumulates data by means of still cameras, movie cameras, tape recorders, and pad and pencil. Over the years, he has acquainted himself with an extraordinary variety of street people and has become in the eyes of his fellow-citizens a street person himself—an eccentric among a host of eccentrics. He writes about such star turns as Mr. Magoo, a plump man in his seventies who takes it upon himself to direct traffic at busy intersections, especially on Fifth Avenue, and Tambourine Woman, who attracts the attention of passersby with vigorous shakings of a tambourine and, in the course of an extended harangue that follows, confides that she was once the "little girlfriend" of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Whyte says of these eccentrics, "Whatever the fantasies they have been acting out, they make a beneficent presence on the street." He goes on to note that "their ranks have been swelled by scores of disturbed people released from institutions" since the mid-seventies, and writes, "There has been no outpatient support for these people and a number are on the streets who ought not to be. . . . The institutional experience conditioned them to a highly structured environment; for such people the freedom of the city can be a frightening experience. For some the only refuge is the single-room-occupancy hotel. But they are afraid of that too, and the people who might prey on them." Yet Whyte sets down even these sorry facts with compassion: "One of their few pleasures is sitting in the sun on the benches in the middle of upper Broadway. Older people of all kinds come there: some talkative, some rigidly silent. There may be a head-nodding junkie or two as well. But they are reasonably safe places and there is lots of life to see."

Lots of life to see! Few students of the plight of New York City are likely to find room in their reports for a phrase at once so old-fashioned and so humane. Whyte has devoted much time to a study of what he calls the "underlife" of the street—the beggars, the drug dealers, the phony pitchmen for good causes, the three-card-monte players and their shills, the prostitutes and their pimps, and the muggers, who as a group can be identified by their custom of wearing white tennis shoes. (Whyte takes care to note that, while most muggers wear white tennis shoes, most people who wear white tennis shoes are not muggers.) He has a soft spot in his heart for phony pitchmen. Here is his thumbnail sketch of one of the most successful of them:

> A jaunty fellow with a tweed cap stands beside a small table. On it is a clipboard and writing pad. A sign fixed to the table says SAVE THE PORPOISE! As people go by he says to them, please join the fight and sign the petition for the porpoises. Many people stop. Just sign here, he says, extending a pen. As they sign up, he suggests that a small donation would help. Overhead. Printing expenses. He is giving his time free. Most of those who stop, sign, and most of those who sign, give.
>
> He came upon this modus operandi some years ago. I first saw him when his sign read SAVE GRAND CENTRAL. This was in 1975, when many citizens were quick to give for this estimable cause. The Municipal Art Society was most upset to have an impostor siphon away contributions, and it went to the police.
>
> SAVE THE WHALES, the sign next read. A picture . . . showed small whales being clubbed to death. This appeal must have proved very lucrative, for he continued with it until the early eighties, when he switched to the porpoise.



Whyte is an ardent defender of street entertainers. Most street entertainers are students, unemployed actors, and the like, working part time for voluntary contributions. Among the choicest performing areas are the steps of the Public Library, the steps of the Metropolitan Museum, and the steps of St. Thomas Church. For musicians, the corner of Fifth Avenue and Fifty-ninth Street is the equivalent of playing the Palace in the glory days of vaudeville.

According to Whyte, it is largely owing to the complaints of merchants that city councils have passed repressive ordinances against street entertainment. Whyte notes that in New York City street entertainment is legal only if "not much noise is made, the sidewalk is not obstructed, and there is no solicitation for money." Sardonically, he goes on:

> It is odd that people who champion the free market are against such a pure expression of it. What is so wrong about solicitation? The passersby are under no duress. They don't even have to stop. If they do stop, they don't have to give. If they give, the amount is entirely up to them and their judgment of the worth of the entertainer. It is the latter who has taken the entrepreneurial risk. He should be entitled to some reward . . . I wish I could say that our research proved that street entertaining is good for the merchants' stores. I think it is, but our research does not prove this. What it does prove is that there is a high degree of compatibility between a strong retail street and a lively street life. Merchants do not see this. They do not like much about street life anyway, except for customers coming in the door.

AGAIN and again, Whyte is able to demonstrate that the people most strongly exercised over the threatened death of the center of a city are the ones who unwittingly encourage that death. To merchants, street venders are an illegal nuisance, whom the police are insufficiently eager to arrest; to Whyte, they are a harmless sign of urban vigor. The following paragraph is an excellent example of Whyte's racy prose style, conveying his sense of the raw, hit-or-miss exuberance of New York City street life:

> Whatever the merchandise, the pitch is much the same. It's cheaper on the street. Ten dollars inside. One dollar here. Why

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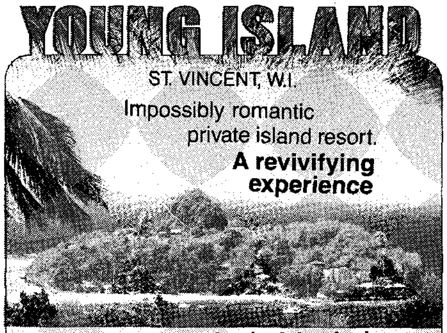

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> pay more? The pitch is often made in a furtive manner, as if the deal were shady. Many vendors look shady. Many try to. It is to their advantage. There is a widespread assumption among knowing New Yorkers that much of the merchandise is stolen. Vendors do nothing to discourage this idea. As in a con game, the latent dishonesty of the customer is all for the good. He *wants* the goods to be stolen. That explains why he is going to snare a bargain. In actual fact, very little of the goods sold by vendors is stolen. They pick up their stuff from the jobbers in the Broadway–Thirtieth Street area who specialize in novelty merchandise. But if you ask the vendors where the goods came from, they may look at you slyly and wink.

Whyte has observed what happens when, from time to time, the police have been commanded to descend upon the venders in force:

> There will be shouts and whistles, and vendors racing this way and that. It takes about twenty to thirty seconds—I have timed these flurries—and then there will be no one except the police, and perhaps one hapless vendor who has been a bit too slow. Half an hour later the vendors will all be back.

A number of New Yorkers take as dark a view of the waves of immigrants currently arriving in this city as, in the nineteenth century, George Templeton Strong took of the brawling Irish greenhorns whom he was obliged to make his way around when journeying to and from his mansion on Gramercy Park. Whyte views our immigrants not merely with equanimity but with admiration:

> Many vendors, probably a majority, are recent immigrants. Until recently, Middle Easterners dominated merchandise vending, as Greeks did food vending. But ethnic patterns are shifting. Since 1983, there has been a strong influx of young men from Senegal, a former French colony on the west coast of Africa. From generation to generation street selling has been an honored tradition in Senegal. In recent years Senegalese vendors have become a fixture on the streets of Paris and from there they have spread to other European cities. Now they are in New York, over six hundred at latest estimate, and their numbers are increasing rapidly.
>
> They are different from other vendors. They are polite, for one thing; even the police who arrest them note this. They speak little English, but they speak it with a soft French accent. They sell everything, but they are partial to gold trinkets and watches. Like other vendors, they buy from the jobbers.
>
> They do not hawk their wares; they just stand silently behind their trays of goods. If they do address a customer, it is with a whispered question. Gold watches? Gold watches? Their serenity is disarming.

Whyte is a champion of food venders on our streets, in part because he likes them and in part because faulty city planning has rendered them indispensable. Sixth Avenue in midtown was once lined with convenient, low-priced delis, cafeterias, coffee shops, and the like. The construction of a succession of enormous, faceless office buildings, complete with inutile plazas, left a vacuum that the venders were quick to fill—what Whyte calls "the revenge of the street."

Since 1978, the number of licensed food venders in New York City has grown from thirty-four hundred to forty-three hundred. The menu has also expanded; to such staples as hot dogs, pretzels, soda, ice cream, and chestnuts have been added many foreign dishes, including souvlaki, falafel, Greek sausages, Italian sausages, bratwurst, and even Rock Cornish hen, and omelettes to order. As for the quality of the food, Whyte asserts that it is excellent and is prepared under hygienic conditions; by law, carts in which cooking is done must have hot and cold water, provisions for chilling as well as for cooking, and hoods with filters and exhaust fans. The Health Department, Whyte says, has yet to trace a case of food poisoning to a food vender.

Beyond revenge is the more agreeable emotion of fraternity. As Whyte says, our dealings with merchandise venders tend to be adversarial, while our dealings with food venders are familial:

> One buys from them not just for the food, but to check in. There is Gus, for example, at the northeast corner of Fifty-second and Park. He has had his hotdog cart there for over fifteen years—every day, no matter what the weather. In winter, he moves his cart directly over the cover of a steam manhole and traps the warmth with an awning. He is not very talkative but people like to stop by and say hello. He has put a son through college and graduate school from his earnings.

Still, it is we peripatetic, anonymous New Yorkers who are to Whyte the most interesting of street people. In our unself-conscious, helter-skelter comings and goings he sees the richest embodiment of the densely packed, vividly experienced street life of a great city. Unbeknownst to us, he has studied our least word and gesture, and has discovered certain things about our conduct that most of us would be likely to deny, because they seem totally unreasonable and therefore totally unlike us.

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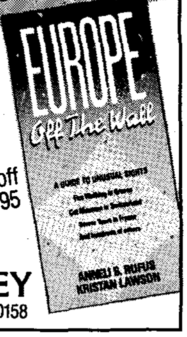

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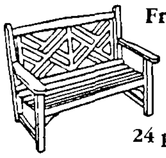

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out to be! For example, the way we encounter acquaintances on a busy street and chat with them follows a pattern that defies common sense. Whyte writes of his earliest discoveries:

> The activity was not as expected. To our surprise, the people who stopped to talk did not move out of the main pedestrian flow; and if they had been out of it, they moved into it. The great bulk of the conversations were smack in the middle of the pedestrian flow—the 100 percent location, to borrow the real estate term. In subsequent studies we were to find the same impulse to the center in traveling conversations—the kind in which two people move about a lot but don't go very far.

Like our greetings, our goodbyes follow certain rituals, which we may be entirely unaware of, especially in the case of what Whyte calls "a failed goodbye":

> Most goodbyes are brief: a fast "ciao," "take care," a wave, and they're off. But a number are protracted, particularly so when they are an extension of a failed goodbye.... If people go through the motions of a goodbye and stop short at the point of consummation, a momentum is set up that can lead to progressively more emphatic goodbyes, up to the final resolving goodbye. It is fascinating to watch these three- and four-wave goodbyes and try to distinguish the real goodbye from the false ones. Don't be fooled by the glance at the watch. It is only premonitory. I have a wonderful film record of two men gripped in indecision in front of Saks Fifth Avenue. They just can't bring themselves to part. There are several rounds of goodbyes and looks at the watch, but it's not until a third party comes along that they finally break out of their impasse.

Whyte furnishes us with a scholarly passage on the ancient garment-district practice of schmoozing—a Yiddish term whose basic meaning is "nothing talk" and which on Seventh Avenue implies idle gossip about sports, political events, and the like. Whyte points out that while the urban setting is execrable—"it is without trees or graces, it is noisy and fume-ridden, and the traffic is so bad even cyclists try to give the place a wide berth"—if you were to ask the schmoozers whether they wouldn't prefer the plazas and open spaces farther uptown they would look at you as if you were crazy. "Those other places: people don't *work* there. Kid stuff. This is the center of things."

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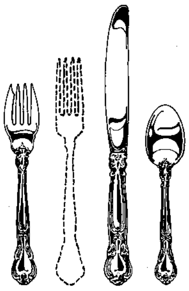

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centers of other great American cities can hold. Having conscientiously marshalled all the evidence against the likelihood of their being able to do so, Whyte nevertheless suggests that they will. His evidence in behalf of this suggestion is based upon a vast mountain of statistics, some of which have already led to major improvements in the statutes that regulate the use of our light and air. But I suspect that far more important to Whyte than these facts is the intuition he has concerning the nature of the city's inhabitants. What he appears to find most admirable in us New Yorkers is our ineradicable animal bent for clustering. He is confident of our ability to survive almost any amount of discomfort, and even of danger, as long as we can jam ourselves together in a strictly defined space. The rich as well as the poor are guided by this instinct. Whyte notes of Madison Avenue in the Sixties and Seventies that it is "probably the finest specialty-shop street in the world." Of what does it consist? The most commonplace of elements—a narrow thoroughfare whose basic module is the five-story brownstone, twenty feet wide, with ten brownstones to a block. Like Lexington Avenue, it has the advantage of being double-decked: shops and restaurants occupy not only the ground floors of many of the brownstones but the second floors as well. Customers eagerly climb the steep and narrow steps to the second floor, though if they were to find themselves in a two-story suburban shopping mall they would no doubt be looking around for an escalator.

With undisguised satisfaction, Whyte reports that many of the big companies that moved out of New York City into the quite distant suburbs in the fifties, sixties, and seventies are not as happy in the woods as they counted on being. Employees find it lonely there among the chipmunks and woodchucks. They are bored to encounter only one another in the company cafeterias, the company gymnasiums, the company grounds. The reasons that companies have given for moving out of New York are filled with what Whyte calls "self-serving piety"; in 1976, Union Carbide, leaving an ideal location on Park Avenue at Forty-seventh Street, said that it was moving to new headquarters, near Danbury, Connecticut, ninety miles to the north, largely for the sake of "the long term quality-of-life needs of our headquarters employees." The company had spent two years (and no doubt a considerable sum of money) conducting the study that led to this decision. Says Whyte:

> It's a wonder executives keep a straight face. Life-style needs of employees? Companies don't have to spend all that money researching them. They don't have to compare area A with area B and area C. All they have to do is look in the phone directory. Where does the boss live? That is where the company is going.... During the height of the exodus I made a location study. I plotted the moves of all the major corporations that had moved from New York to the suburbs and beyond over the previous ten years. By checking old phone directories, street maps, and registers of executives, I plotted the home locations of the chief executive officer and his fellow top executives at the time the decision was made to move. Then I plotted the location the company moved to.
>
> The correlation: of thirty-eight corporations, thirty-one moved to a place close to the top man's home. Average distance: about eight miles by road.

According to Whyte's calculations, the companies that have remained in the city have done better than the companies that have moved out. "The center city is competing rather well," he writes. "The office jobs that it has been losing have been mostly in the big, aging companies—the ones most likely to head for suburbia and to bomb when they do. The new-job increases have been mostly in newer, smaller firms. They are local companies, most of them, but as Jane Jacobs has observed, local economies are where it all starts. The small companies need access to a wide range of specialized services and people. They cannot have this in-house. They are not big enough. They cannot have this out in some isolated location. They need to be in the center—or as close to it as rents and space will permit."

Thanks to Whyte, we dare to suppose that the center will hold. We who hug the city to us by instinct are grateful to Whyte for providing us with a hundred—a thousand—formal arguments for doing so. How reassuring it is, when one suspects oneself of having acted foolishly, to be told that one has been acting wisely! It is then that, for us as for Oliver Edwards and Holly Whyte, cheerfulness breaks in.

—BRENDAN GILL

BOOKS

An Ear for the Unspoken

COMMON sense suggests that the comedy of manners ought to flourish in Japan. What more fertile ground could there be for that gentle, slightly quaint literary genre than a country whose etiquette is ancient, embracing, lovely, and, at times, quite paralyzing? But, reasonable though such expectations may be, few novels that fulfill them have surfaced in the West. The modern Japanese writers who have some following in our country—principally Yukio Mishima, Yasunari Kawabata, Junichiro Tanizaki, Kobo Abe, and Shusaku Endo—are capable of amusing us in diverse ways, but none could be thought of (even after allowances are made for the perishability of humor in translation) as a comic novelist.

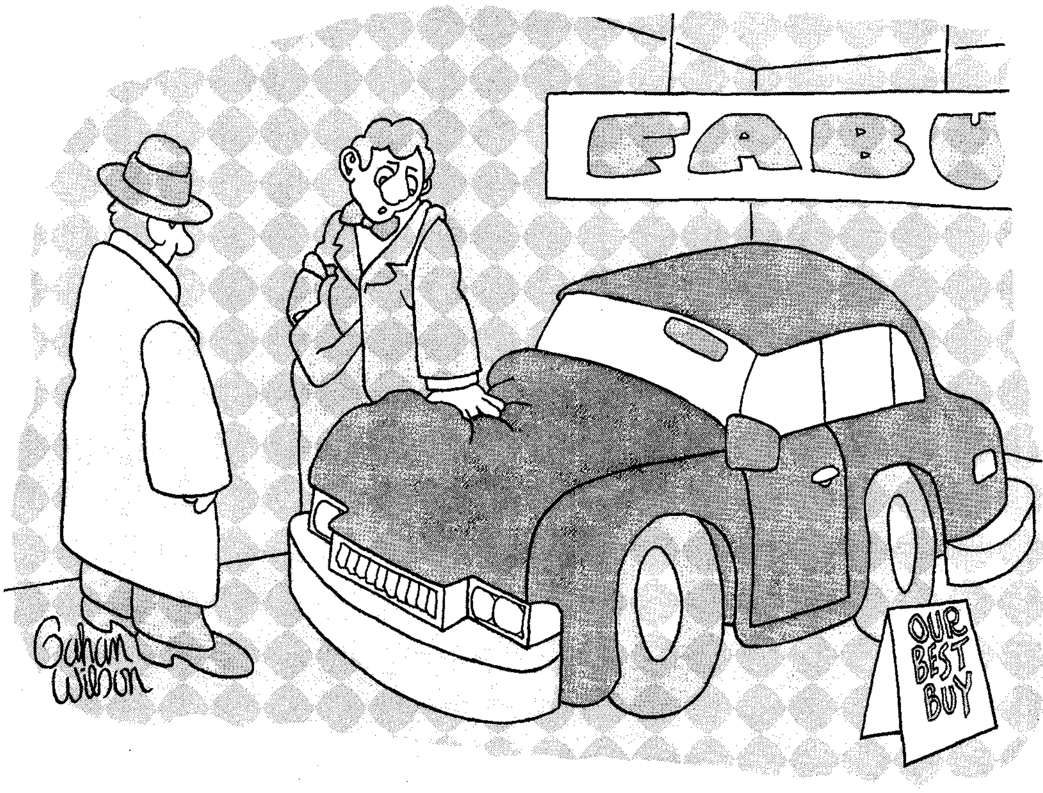
The arrival of Saiichi Maruya's "Singular Rebellion" (translated from the Japanese by Dennis Keene; Kodansha; $19.95) therefore comes as something of a surprise, and it urges us to ponder the degree to which an unwitting connivance of social and commercial forces may skew our vision at the outset by determining which works are translated. Could it be that the novel of delicacy, taciturnity, elusiveness, and languishing melancholy—traits we have come to think of as characteristically Japanese—is less characteristic than we thought? "Singular Rebellion" is a big, gregarious, boisterous book. Maruya, who was born in 1925, has been a popular writer in Japan for two decades; he has been a notable translator, introducing his countrymen to some of Graham Greene's "entertainments" and to Jerome K. Jerome's "Three Men in a Boat"; and he has received significant literary prizes. Nonetheless, "Singular Rebellion" is the first book of his to find its way into English, and required fourteen years to do so. Given its charm—at a number of points it made me laugh aloud—one can only suspect that the Japanese humorist faces considerable international resistance.

Literary absences are often difficult to isolate and identify, and not until I came across "Singular Rebellion" did I realize that here was a tone—bantering, chummy, exaggeratedly and playfully levelheaded—unlike anything I'd ever heard in a Japanese novel. From its opening lines, the book presupposes an informal, comfortable sharing of assumptions between reader and writer:

> There's a lot to be said for having a girl fall in love with you because she's mad about your good looks, or—if your looks aren't up to much—your friendly, cheerful personality. There's even more to be said for having her succumb to a protracted campaign of pure attrition. But for her to take a liking to you on account of your great-grandfather is surely eccentric; and yet I can't help feeling it wasn't until we got on to the subject of that grand old man that Yukari started showing any interest in me.

With remarkable speed, the reader comes to look on the book's hero, a widower named Eisuke Mabuchi, as a friend.

Since reticence is both the method and the theme of a large number of Japanese novels, readers may consider Mabuchi's easy garrulity an act of rebellion. If they do, they will be in accord with most of Mabuchi's acquaintances, who are forever ascribing more rebelliousness to him than he will admit to. In 1969, when the story opens, Mabuchi is an ex-civil servant: he left his job a few years before, upon being asked to transfer to the Ministry of Defense, and now works for a company that manufactures electrical appliances. This spurning of the military seems, especially to the young people he meets, a symbolic blow against the establishment—an action no less insurrectionary for his having subsequently become a businessman. Mabuchi himself sees little daring in his stand, and stresses that he is "very much an establishment person." He makes a great point of his ordinariness. And yet this ordinary man's life grows more outlandish with every page. He marries a young fashion model (the



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aforementioned Yukari); accepts as a boarder Yukari's grandmother upon her release from prison, where she has spent thirteen years for murdering her husband; befriends a politically radical free-lance photographer who specializes in student riots and street disturbances; and, in the end, forgives Yukari for committing a flagrant act of adultery. After a good deal of rumination, Mabuchi determines that, if no revolutionary, he is indeed an unconventional man:

> I don't suppose there can be all that many people in whom the solid virtues of the citizen seem to coexist in exactly equal proportions with their opposites. My wish to rebel balanced my desire to conform.

Mabuchi may have no use for reticence, but it provides, just the same, some of the book's most telling moments. He is surrounded by people of few words. Near the novel's close, Tsuru, the consummately devoted, "feudalistic" servant who has been with him for decades, announces that she is leaving his service, and takes this opportunity to extend some understated but unmistakably bitter advice: "Master Eisuke, I strongly recommend that you do not refer to the next person who comes here as 'the maid.' " And when Yukari, who has never previously pitched any serious complaint against her husband, seeks to explain her infidelity she blurts out a cryptic protest about "the bed problem"—words from which Mabuchi, who hears in them a challenge to his virility, recoils. But it turns out that what is bothering Yukari is her husband's simple failure to buy a new bed; she resents the ghost of Mabuchi's first wife in their bedroom, and one of her reasons for taking a lover may have been to amend the imbalance of a spiritual ménage à trois. Her abrupt complaint sets Mabuchi wondering about his first wife:

> In the dim light of the taxi I thought how women got upset by such peculiar things and then kept quiet about them, and I suddenly remembered my first wife and wondered if she too had been dissatisfied in various ways like Yukari, and whether she'd died without ever mentioning them. And if she had, then what things had she hated in me, I wondered, feeling again close to her and yet sensing what a mystery she'd been essentially, something unfathomed, eventually unknown.

The poignance of this moment proves all the more intense because of Mabuchi's fundamental decency; he is a likable and loving man. But it appears that he has little ear for the

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unspoken. Day by day—the author seems to be telling us—even the kindliest head of a household may be squelching the life of his servant or his spouse.

"I'm confused, I'm sad, I'm bewildered . . . that's how it is," Mabuchi explains when he confronts his wife and her lover. He has every right to feel confused, since guardian angels have heretofore rescued him at every misstep. Benign forces are astir throughout the novel, making altogether plausible, for instance, the evolution by which Yukari's homicidal grandmother settles down in cozy domesticity with another former jailbird—a man who, she confesses with mixed pride and illogic, is intelligent enough to have been twice convicted of fraud. In the long run, then, Mabuchi doesn't have anything to worry about—nor, in this sunny-spirited book, does anybody else.

But if "Singular Rebellion" has the enchanted, sheltered feel of a fairy tale, it also boasts a rich, lived-in density; the rooms and streets through which Mabuchi moves have nothing attenuated or sketchy—nothing of the traditional Japanese watercolor—about them. Rather, the landscape is satisfyingly weighted and cluttered, as in this reflection, prompted by a business trip:

> When I stepped out of the plane at Manila into the velvet darkness and the sweltering heat, I regretted not having remained behind on the aircraft. This was partly due to the heat, but the main reason was that I remembered how nasty the duty-free shop in the transit lounge had been some years ago, all they had on sale being local products such as Philippine cigars and some "artless" (or, to be brutally frank, barbaric) pieces of native handicraft, crude trays, boxes, and ornaments made of wood. I'd found them distinctly unattractive, feeling that in these primitive objects all the poverty and wretchedness of Asia was on blatant display.

Even in Mabuchi's moments of perceptual nicety, his world seems tactile, solid—as when, in a blending of reverie and desire, he arrives at Yukari's apartment for their first real date, and she retreats into her bedroom to change her clothes:

> I was surprised it could be as quiet as this in Tokyo. She hadn't closed the door to her room all that efficiently (which may have been on purpose, I don't know), and there was a fairly large gap through which I could hear her taking her things off one by one, a much more emphatically erotic sound than if the door had been wide open. The fact that I thought I could hear the rustling sound as she slid off her stockings probably only indicates how the lack of a visual object will stimulate the imagination to more vigorous activity, and now I was seeing Yukari as she approached stage by stage the state of total nudity, pricking up my ears in the silence that this perverse, usually clamorous town had decided to preserve for me, forever it seemed, and smoking my cigarette.

While there is something pleasingly improbable in Mabuchi's successful juggling of his duties as a "salaryman" and his growing loyalty to a demimonde of fashion models, murderesses, con men, and door-to-door peddlers of aphrodisiacs, his feat is but an emblem of the novel's larger meshing of stylistic incongruities. Perhaps chief among the multiple pleasures of "Singular Rebellion" is its way of harmonizing the workaday and the numinous. The book offers those who have never visited Japan a foretaste of a similar reconciliation—one to be found throughout Japanese towns and cities, but perhaps most strikingly in the floodlit shopping emporiums that are stacked beneath some of the major train stations. The first-time tourist who wanders there, with all the technological miracles of an emerging world arrayed in tight, glittering profusion before him, might swear that the world of the fairy tale and the world of commerce are one.

SHUSAKU ENDO'S "Scandal" (translated by Van C. Gessel; Dodd, Mead; $18.95), his eighth book of fiction to be published in this country, may not elicit, as "Singular Rebellion" does, audible laughter, but it is in many ways the most high-spirited volume we have seen from him so far. Endo is often called a Japanese Graham Greene, and though, like most such border-crossing equivalences, this comparison carries a danger of reductionism, it does prove illuminating. Both men are not merely Catholics but Catholic writers, whose books are an open, ongoing meditation on the meaning of their faith. Both are obsessed with physical pain and the ways in which the body—that mere envelope of the everlasting soul—can distort or canker our spiritual convictions. In selecting a hero, both show a penchant for loners who undertake long journeys that quickly become spiritual pilgrimages. And in bidding their heroes farewell both can be unsentimental to the point of coolness. But in the case of "Scandal" the English Catholic writer whom Endo most tellingly evokes is not Greene but the Evelyn Waugh of "The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold." In

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"Scandal," as in "Pinfold," we encounter cheerfully undisguised self-portraiture: the author's counterpart is a happily married, aging, eminent Catholic writer who temporarily slips into confusions that may signal a bout of madness.

With the possible exception of Kobo Abe, Endo is Japan's best-known living writer. His books have been translated into more than twenty languages, and he has grown to seem a plausible candidate for the Nobel Prize. For some Western readers, Endo's appeal may stem less from his literary gifts than from his Catholicism, which provides a familiar doorway into an otherwise insular culture. Those who have previously found Japanese novels intractable or remote will surely take heart at Endo's patent sense of being, by virtue of his faith, an outsider in his own country. But Endo's literary attractions reach far beyond matters of faith. He is a craftsman of organization. Pick up any of his books and you are likely to discover that the narrative proportions feel right, that subplots tuck neatly into the larger plot, that the story advances with the surefootedness of someone who understands pacing. He can also be admirably relentless; he does not blink or flinch when handling cruelty, selfishness, or betrayal. At the same time, he exhibits an endearing and somewhat old-fashioned complaisance. Unmistakably, he wishes to accommodate his readers and will do anything in his power to keep them interested or to help them understand. It is typical of Endo to have begun a novel—"When I Whistle"—with the words "Excuse me."

Such virtues having been tallied, it must be pointed out that he displays a number of fundamental shortcomings that might not be expected in a writer of his international renown. He is an artist of finite inventiveness, and especially along a story's edges—in its minor characters and tangential incidents—creative energies seep away. His work rarely surprises. On both the small scale (choice of similes, treatment of dialogue, evocations of place) and the large (revelations of plot, character, theme), Endo's fiction usually proceeds along foreseeable lines. And at times—as in his early novel "Volcano," in which a smoking mountain represents buried human passion, the struggling human spirit, the indifference of nature, God's anger, and much

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more—he will invest an object with a greater weight of symbolism than his characters themselves merit; he can be heavy-handed.

Most of his virtues are on display in "Scandal"—as are his weaknesses, although in diluted enough form to seem more illustrative than irksome. The book is a variation on the doppelgänger theme, which has fascinated many twentieth-century writers (including Nabokov, Borges, Calvino, and Lem) and whose nineteenth-century dual forefather is Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde. The story opens as its hero, Suguro, is about to receive a major literary prize. During the ceremony, he spots someone who looks a good deal like himself, who wears an expression that "could be taken either as a grin or a sneer," and who disappears before Suguro can speak to him. Unfortunately, this disappearance is not complete; Suguro's double goes underground, where he consorts with louche young women and generally misbehaves in a Hyde-like fashion. Suguro's double, it becomes clear, is in the heady position of having his public misdeeds attributed to another—to, ironically, the esteemed Catholic novelist Suguro, who has built his literary reputation on investigations into the concept of sin.

The book has its menacing overtones (including the revelation that a seemingly angelic middle-aged woman is a sexual sadomasochist) and its profound theological questions, but in its tone and in the antic improbabilities of its plot it offers a levity all the more welcome in the light of the grimness pervading so much of Endo's work. His novels have seemed at times like sermons of unrelieved bleakness. He is clearly obsessed with what he perceives as a characteristically Japanese tendency to retreat from national disgraces and disasters; in particular, he has asked his readers, throughout his career, to contemplate the tortures that the seventeenth-century shoguns imposed upon Christians—Japanese converts and European missionaries alike—in order to compel recantation. When not dealing with religious persecution and martyrdom, he has often turned to another cheerless subject—the modern hospital, where he has spent, all told, years of his life. Endo, who was born in 1923, has suffered from grave health problems during most of his adulthood and has had to undergo some risky lung operations. It is tempting to suppose that while he was lying in a crowded ward, listening nightly to the sound of torment that was, blessedly, softened by modern anesthetics, he became haunted by the way the torturer employs his intellect not to mitigate pain but to enhance it. In any case, Endo's is an imagination that paces between the torture chamber and the sickroom, and a reader cannot help delighting in the unwonted breeziness of "Scandal." Endo seems to be having fun.

A good argument might be made, though, that fun isn't Endo's métier. Here and there, "Scandal" shows signs of strain—in its occasionally forced dialogue, its stereotyped lowlife, and its repetitions that do not deepen but merely rephrase what has come before. What is unquestionably his darkest novel, "Silence"—translated twenty years ago—is almost as unquestionably his finest. It is a hearteningly bold novel in many ways, the most striking being that its hero is not a contemporary Japanese but a seventeenth-century Portuguese, a Jesuit missionary named Rodrigues. Endo has sought, from book to book, to envision his country from the outside, and in the annals of Japanese letters probably no one has made comparable efforts to see the world from a foreigner's point of view. Here is how Japan appears to Rodrigues, from his monastery in Portugal: "As one opened the map one saw the shape of Africa, then India, and then the innumerable islands and countries of Asia were all spread out. And then, at the northeast extremity, looking just like a caterpillar, was the tiny shape of Japan."

In moral terms, "Silence" is as complex and instructive as almost any novel I know. Its title is something of an indictment. Why, Rodrigues wonders, does God refuse to speak to us, even in our moments of mortal need? For the bulk of the story, as Rodrigues travels from Portugal to India, from India to Macao, and from Macao to southern Japan, where he performs clandestine Masses and baptisms, he foresees his eventual capture by the shogun's agents, and his overriding concern is whether or not he will be able to hold steadfast to his Christianity under torture. The book promises a gruesome test of faith. But after his capture Rodrigues is put to no test. He

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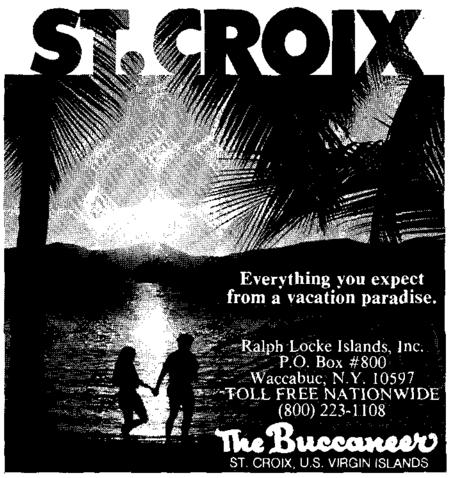

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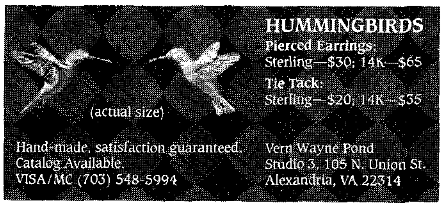

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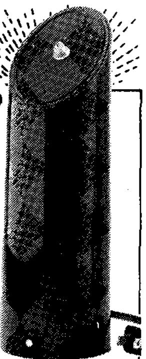

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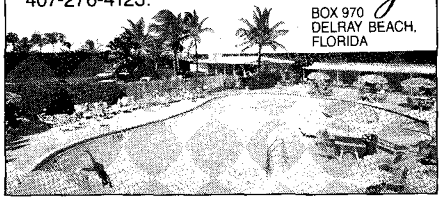

chooses, for reasons that seem influenced but not dominated by fear, to apostatize—a decision that leaves the reader feeling let down. Where is the struggle that we have been promised? A hunger inside us for combat and adventure has been stirred but not sated. Only when we step back from the book do we recognize that our letdown is, in truth, disappointment at seeing a courageous, noble man released from unthinkable agonies—that, in short, we have been made spiritual confederates of Rodrigues' persecutors. In our urge for conflict we have become complicitous with the barbarians.

A lingering puzzle in Endo's œuvre is whether his ascetic temperament derives from his Christianity or he finds Christianity congenial because of an innate asceticism. What is clear, in either case, is that Endo is the least sensuous of major modern Japanese writers. His renunciation of bodily pleasures encompasses the sexual act but extends well beyond it to the smells, tastes, and tactile beguilements of everyday life. In his eight books of translated fiction, many meals are served, but there is never a moment when the reader's mouth waters. Many sounds ring out, but never one that hovers musically in the ear. Endo proves an anomaly in a country whose novelists have generally extolled the virtues of a finely calibrated physical existence. In Tanizaki's "The Makioka Sisters," for instance, the reader may entertain doubts about how well Sachiko, one of the novel's heroines, would perform in a blind taste-test involving sea bream taken from Osaka waters, which she relishes, and sea bream caught elsewhere, which she dismisses—but one never questions either her faith in her discernment or Tanizaki's admiration for it. One feels a similar authorial approbation in the talk about variations of dye and silk in Kawabata's "The Old Capital," and in the discussions about the essence of sand in Abe's "The Woman in the Dunes." All this fussing over minuscule differentiations uplifts a Western reader; it acts as a counterweight to the down-dragging melancholy of so much Japanese fiction. Even when a book ends sadly, one may still feel cheered by the company of people who seem pricklingly alive to the material nuances of the world.

Endo is looking and listening elsewhere. Compared with, say, Tanizaki,

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who turns with such avid, infectious joy to the fulfillments of music, food, sex, theatre, gardens, Endo seems like only half a writer. Endo himself would perhaps not dispute the accusation. However, he would surely add that by forsaking in his fiction the body for the spirit he had chosen the right half.

—BRAD LEITHAUSER

BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

FIVE SEASONS, by A. B. Yehoshua, translated from the Hebrew by Hillel Halkin (Doubleday; $19.95). This patient narration carries us through the tentative seasons of the first year after the death of a man's wife, moving us by treating the pain and the strange excitement the event brings with the same honesty. The middle-aged Molkho devoted himself to his wife during her seven-year struggle with cancer; he's proud that, with his aid, she was able to die in her own bed in their Haifa apartment, as she wished. Their three children are nearly grown, and are left to tend to their own emotional needs as the self-absorbed Molkho fusses over financial matters, feels alternately lonely and unburdened, eats too much, diets, goes abroad by himself, and makes shy attempts with women. The author's method of piling detail upon detail traps us inside Molkho's new life. We putter endlessly with him between the kitchen sink and the toilet and the garden, reminded that the void left after a death amounts to more than the awful loss of a person; the survivor suddenly has a lot of time, and nothing to do.

THE GOOD TIMES ARE KILLING ME, by Lynda Barry (Real Comet; $16.95, paper). This novel is seventy pages long, and it is followed by a series of paintings of popular musicians, also by the author, accompanied by handwritten bios in the style of liner notes. The conceit of the story is that it is written by a twelve-year-old girl, Edna Arkins, about the demise of her friendship with Bonna Willis, "just about the best ass beater I have ever met in my life, boys included." Edna is white, Bonna is black, and it is around the time the Black Power movement is emerging. Bonna's brother drowns and her mother goes mad. Edna's father abandons the family to

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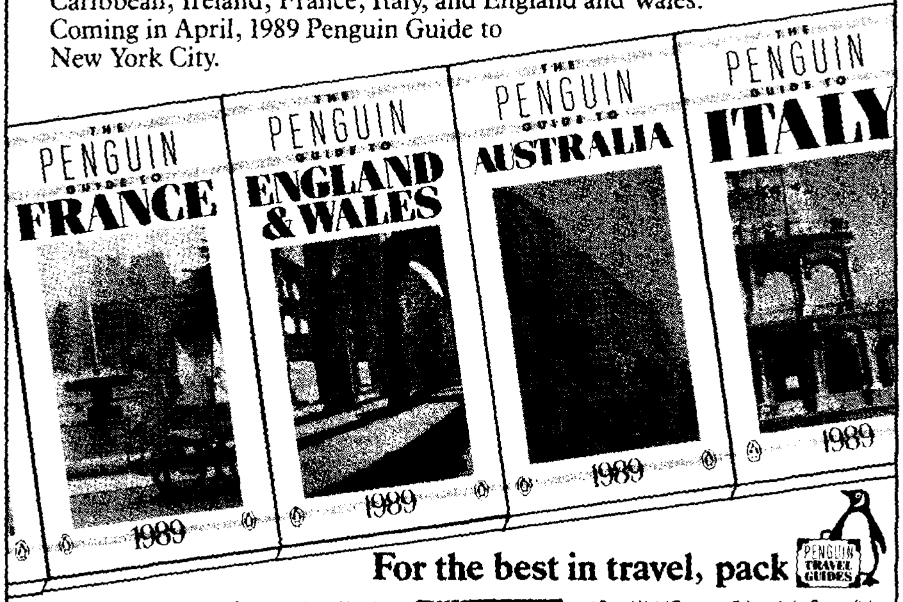
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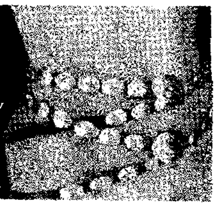

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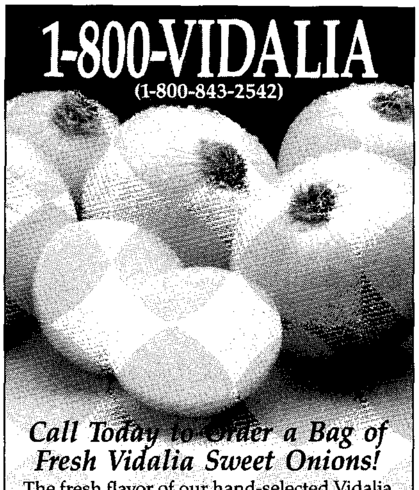

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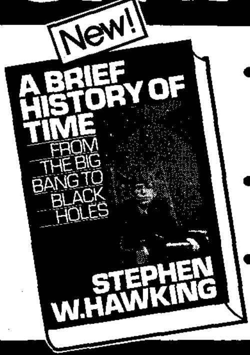

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the neighborhood, which is rapidly changing from white to Asian and black. The tone, however, is light, and Edna discourses amusingly on childhood situations and states of feeling. What the narrative gains from the paintings is a mystery. What story, notes, and pictures have in common is their faux-naïve style and, possibly, a propensity to smile in the face of strife.

GENERAL

This Boy's Life: A Memoir, by Tobias Wolff (Atlantic Monthly; $18.95). Reading this finely composed and fastidiously voiced recollection of a troubled adolescence, one wonders how the writer could have emerged from the unhappy, unruly, unregenerate boy it describes. We meet Tobias Wolff at age ten, in 1955, arriving in Salt Lake City from Florida with his mother, recently divorced from his father, a charming crook and four-flusher, and settling into a hand-to-mouth life with a tattooed fellow called Roy. We move on to a small town near Seattle, where his mother takes up with and marries a widower named Dwight, who is all smiles at first, in his hand-painted neckties and two-toned shoes, but soon reveals himself to be a monster—drunken, snivelling, sadistic. It is in the shadow of this man, portrayed in quietly searing examples, that the author's youth takes form—he cheats in school, lies at home, steals from his newspaper-route customers, seeks out the lowest company, forges checks, and, in a dramatic climax, fabricates an academic record and letters of recommendation that get him accepted at an Eastern prep school. It is a deception worthy of his infamous father, and is carried off with something of his father's charm.

Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939, by John R. Stilgoe (Yale; $35). A historian of American landscape recounts the creation of residential suburbs in the ever-shifting borderlands between cities and farms. His book offers readers all over this country the pleasure of seeing familiar places with new eyes. Suburbs are the offspring of an unlikely match between Romanticism and industrialism—between picturesque scenery and the machinery for commuting. Mr. Stilgoe records more than a century of discussion and creation that redefined styles in landscape and architecture; deals with a variety of people (aesthetes, real-estate speculators, struggling farmers) and a succession of crusades (against white-painted houses, for example) and innovations in life styles (do-it-yourself); and draws source material from a wide range of disciplines. His achievement is impressive, his style is lucid, and his judgments are humane. The illustrations are abundant and apt.

All the Wrong Places: Adrift in the Politics of the Pacific Rim, by James Fenton (Atlantic Monthly; $7.95, paper). Early in this collection of reports on fourteen years of upheaval in Asia, Mr. Fenton considers founding a new style of journalism: "It was to be called the Crepuscular School and the rules were simple: Believe nothing that you are told before dusk. . . . [The] predominant colorings would be melancholy and gloom." Together with a dry sense of post-colonial irony, melancholy and gloom are the author's chief tools for describing the final years of the Vietnam War; a Filipino scene that included Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, Cory Aquino, and guerrillas in Mickey Mouse T-shirts; and the failures of the electoral opposition and of the student insurrection in Korea in 1987. His reliance on simply hanging out and his antipathy to bravado work best in the section on the Philippines, where the jauntiness of the events themselves and the immediacy of the reporting neutralize his usual funereal tone. Elsewhere, one wishes for less of the moody diarist-reporter and more of the historian.

Note: "The Stolen Light," Ved Mehta's memoir of his college years, has been published by Norton ($19.95). Some of the contents originally appeared in *The New Yorker*.

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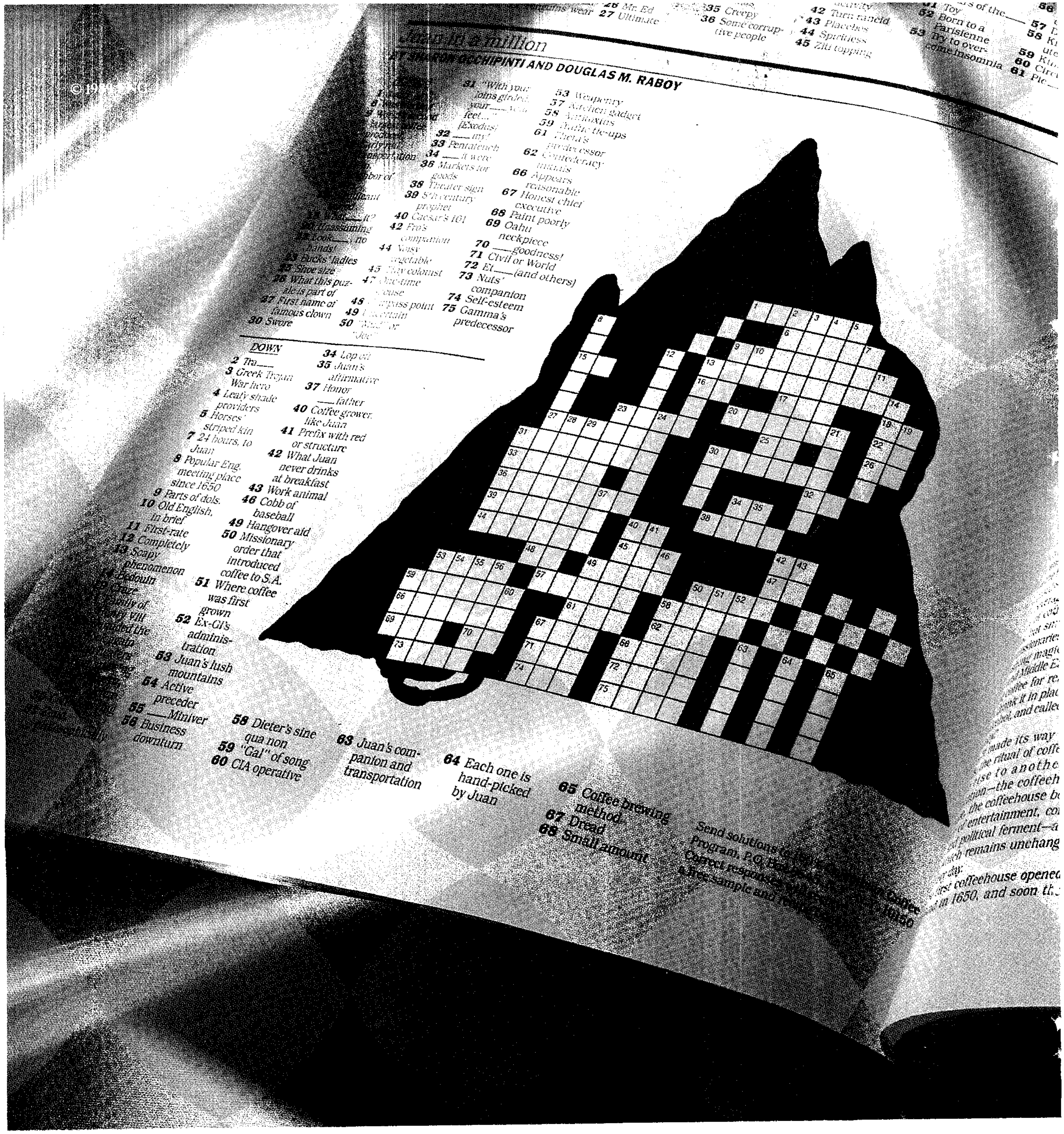

Juan in a million

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31 "With your loins girded, your ___ on your feet..." (Exodus)
32 ___ my!
33 Pentateuch
34 ___ it were
36 Markets for goods
38 Theater sign
39 8th century prophet
40 Caesar's 101
42 Fro's companion
44 Nosy vegetable
53 Weaponry
57 Kitchen gadget
58 Anxious
59 Traffic tie-ups
61 Theta's predecessor
62 Confederacy initials
66 Appears reasonable
67 Honest chief executive
68 Paint poorly
69 Oahu neckpiece
70 ___ goodness!
71 Civil or World
72 Et ___ (and others)
73 Nuts' companion
74 Self-esteem
75 Gamma's predecessor

23 Bucks' ladies
25 Shoe size
26 What this puzzle is part of
27 First name of famous clown
30 Swore

DOWN

2 Tra___
3 Greek Trojan War hero
4 Leafy shade providers
5 Horses' striped kin
7 24 hours, to Juan
8 Popular Eng. meeting place since 1650
9 Parts of dols.
10 Old English, in brief
11 First-rate
12 Completely
13 Soapy phenomenon
34 Lop off
35 Juan's affirmative
37 Honor ___ father
40 Coffee grower, like Juan
41 Prefix with red or structure
42 What Juan never drinks at breakfast
43 Work animal
46 Cobb of baseball
49 Hangover aid
50 Missionary order that introduced coffee to S.A.
51 Where coffee was first grown
52 Ex-GI's administration
53 Juan's lush mountains
54 Active preceder
55 ___ Miniver
56 Business downturn
58 Dieter's sine qua non
59 "Gal" of song
60 CIA operative
63 Juan's companion and transportation
64 Each one is hand-picked by Juan
65 Coffee brewing method
67 Dread
68 Small amount

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